BUDDHISM IN THE CLASSICAL AGE
(C.400-750 A.D.)
BY
SUDHA SENGUPTA

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In memory
of my mother who always
encouraged me in my studies and who
would have been the happiest to see this work

In memory

[illegible] my mother [illegible] always

[illegible]ed me [illegible] my [illegible]dies and who

[illegible] the happ[illegible] to see this work

Foreword

I am very glad to hear the thesis of Professor Smt. Sudhamayi Sengupta is going to be published by the title *Buddhism in the Classical Age (c. 400-750 A.D.)*.

I was unexpectedly asked to join the committee as an examiner in connection with the Ph. D. of Art thesis examination of Calcutta University several years ago, then I received one thesis titled "Buddhism in the Classical Age (c. 400-750 A.D.)" from the Calcutta University and this thesis was written by Smt. Sudhamayi Sengupta who was the professor of Buddhist history into the department of Buddhist Studies of the Delhi University and this thesis was offered in order to award the expected Ph. D. degree of the Calcutta University.

First of all I must apologize for being unable to present my report precisely in detail due to the fact that I have hardly any spare time to elaborate the report as the thesis of Smt. Sudhamayi Sengupta which came to me for the evaluation took me a great deal of time to read and comprehend those most sophisticated technical terms of both English and Sanskrit, which required to consult a great many authenticated dictionaries in order to understand the essence of each and every fact and those of the materials that are available there, then those of the subtle and most profound essence of both religion and philosophy.

Frankly speaking, I myself lack such applied experience as the field of my study is entirely based on history, so I regard this thesis in terms of my academical capacity. However, I tried to examine this most authoritative thesis my best, to the extent of my personal knowledge and experience.

Having read the thesis chapter by chapter with complete concentration behaving like a most serious reader and with great enthusiasm, I, being a foreigner, had been able to obtain a great deal of first-hand knowledge of the historical back-ground of the most glorious country, India, as the chapter of the thesis under the title of "Buddhism in the Classical Age." Written by the above-mentioned author, it emits light on the immemorial history of great India and greatly contributes for the promotion of understanding of the various scholars of the world, those who are deeply interested and seeking for such an authenticated source, which had been written down by an experienced native scholar like the present author.

In the second instance, the chapter with antique objects or in other words 'monuments and the inscriptions' that are presented in great detail are to be regarded as essential facts from the viewpoint of ancient culture-imprints, which represents another important visual source of respective cultural evidence of this big country and its treasure like Ajanta and Ellora and others, though the country possesses innumerable cultural treasures undoubtedly. Another big demonstration toward the contribution of archaeological findings had also been another perfect work as the author herself could read the inscriptions thoroughly without depending on the second person, which I would consider the case as a very important factor.

Of course, without any bit of doubt, the author must have been assisted by the works of many other renowned scholars in order to bring her result to a light.

Regarding the description of the gestures and possessions of those caved statues of various, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhats, Gods and Goddesses and others, it sounds to me all very well done as I have investigated the pictographical pamphlets and books that are conveying various details, those of which I obtained on the occasion of my pilgrimage to that site about fifteen years ago. I was very much attracted by those magnificent cultural remains, which can never be found in the world. I would, in this regard, comment the present thesis which contains an elaborate explanation from my viewpoint

of the importance of archaeological exploration, which yields more solid and better result than decayed document as it can be investigated in a scientific process.

Naturally these substantial important aspects of classical cultural remains can prove very well how the classical religion of India was. Regardless of this current presentation, our country's experts fortunately had been able to explore and research in many different aspects of India, therefore the result of their research is very well understood by our scholars as those had been thoroughly investigated by many experts prior to the final publication in our country. But I still believe that indigenous scholars' exploration and thorough investigation are very essential.

About the chapter dealing with the exchanges of scholars in between China and India, though there are variations of dates stated by various scholars, I would, still say that the result of her research on account of the Chinese pilgrim-scholars: Fa-Hien (A.D. 399-A.D. 414), Sung-Yung (6th century), Hiuen-Tsang (A.D. 630-A.D. 644), I-Tsing (A.D. 673) and Ou-Kong, who probably must have extensively travelled toward the end of eighth century is really well done and it is praiseworthy especially about Indian scholars who travelled to China in different periods. Hence these most detailed facts contribute another substantial evidence toward the history of cultural and friendly relations subsisting in the subsequent centuries in between India and China.

I believe that the presentations in this chapter may also benefit greatly other scholars as this contains the names of the important sutras that had been translated by both Chinese and Indian scholars.

The chapter dealing with religious and secular writings of India concerning Buddhism, is very well recorded in our country due to the fact that our country is one of the Buddhist countries. Hence its facts are well known to the knowledge of our country's people, and under any circumstances I am not in a position to make any comment in this subject dealing with our great Gurus and popular scholars during the reign of famous kings of Gupta Empire in between the second and

eighth century. I have had an opportunity to research immensely on various Tibetan and Chinese historical literatures in collaboration with native scholars of respective countries.

The chapter dealing with religion and philosophy, really plays an essential role in the human society as it really has a profound and subtle essence grasped in practice rather than theoretical knowledge. Hence, I believe, it had been a noteworthy contribution in terms of religion and philosophy, which has interdependent aspect to establish a ground for eternal peace and happiness thus it was followed by the majority.

As far as the two different vehicles : Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna are concerned, I think they had been the foundation for two different categories of people, *i.e.*, the first one is for most advanced and dedicated individuals who really strive for a concept of selflessness and the latter for a rather weaker in terms of strength of the cognition, which apparently achieved by its founder. Otherwise I don't think that they are necessarily to be discriminated except they happened to be by nature, since these two are however, interdependent concepts to each other.

It is matter of appreciation to notice that the author gives good details of Trikayas and different levels of awakened state of mind or consciousness from the lower level point of view and the perception of the higher level and those of the perfections to be achieved by the two different schools. But on the other hand, I am under the impression that it would be more perfect, if the author presented a clear statement and its important relations between the Śunya and Nirvāṇa as it stands a very important faction in the present thesis and a perfect understanding of the intellectual scholars as such is not well established in order to comprehend the essence and what it stands for.

Another impression is that as the inception of Vajrayāna is mentioned, so it will be more perfect, if the precise information about the inception of Sahajayāna and Kālacakrayāna would be added, and also the interwoven relation of the four Tantras: Kriya Tantra,

Carya Tantra, Yoga Tantra and Anuttarayoga Tantra would be mentioned.

Anyhow this book cost the author many years' labour of research and it will be the most suitable reference book for scholars of Buddhist history.

The last of all, I would like to offer my congratulation for the publication of her thesis.

Dr. Tadasu Mitsushima
Professor of Kokushikan University
Tokyo-Japan.

Introduction

The present thesis entitled "Buddhism in the Classical Age" attempts to present a graphic picture of Buddhism that prevailed in India during a long period of some three hundred and fifty years from *circa* 400 to 750 A.D., which is generally known as the Classical Age or even the Golden Age of Indian history, because of a remarkable state of prosperity that had its stamp in every sphere of nation's life. The rise of the imperial Guptas in the north and some contemporary powers in the south brought about great political stability in the country and that in its consequence ushered in a great renaissance in the socio-economic, cultural and religious spheres.

In the field of religion, Buddhism like other contemporary religions was in a florescent state. There were lively creative activities all around, in which not only the monastic community but also the laity took equally active part. Scholars in monastic centres made extensive studies in Buddhist, non-Buddhist and secular texts of all types; and such texts dealing with great many subjects formed the curricula of Buddhist academic centres like the great Universities of Valabhī and Nālandā where thousands of teachers and students lived and studied. Thinkers and philosophers engaged themselves in scholastic writings and discussions, making subtle points of mutual interest the principal issues of their arguments and controversies of religious, metaphysical and logical nature, and creating thereby not only the well-known eighteen schools of Buddhism but also innumerable sects and sub-sects among them.

Hīnayāna gradually declined and shifted its centres to the bordering countries like Kashmira, Gandhara, parts of modern Afghanistan, *etc.*, in the north, and Ceylon, (Śri Lankā) Burma, Siam, Java, *etc.* in the south and south-eastern outskirts of India. Mahāyāna, on the contrary, asserted itself in the remaining major portion of the country. There

were consequently much relaxations in the practices of austerities both for the monks and for the lay people, which opened up the hitherto closed doors of high spiritual positions to the former and an easy means of salvation to the latter. Then, Mahāyāna incorporated into its new and ever-growing pantheon various popular and powerful Brahmanical divinities; and the simple lay people gave vent to their natural religious fervour by worshipping and praying before the visual images of those gods and goddesses, now attired in Buddhist garb and made subservient to the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. Images of these deities were made in stone and metals in great numbers, for the establishment of which numerous temples and religious edifices were built up in various parts of the country. And, naturally enough, local schools of sculptors and architects grew up; and many individual sculptors and architects attained great skill, which is attested to by the ruined remains of temples and religious establishments and extant images in various states of preservation. And with the passing of time the ever-increasing texts of iconography attributed to various deities newer and strikingly curious features and attributes of all conceivable varieties and types. All these natural tendencies led Mahāyāna Buddhism to the fold of Tantrism and helped it to develop into the full-fledged Vajrayāna system, which had its headquarters in eastern India, wherefrom it was disseminated by devoted missionaries to various other countries beyond the limits of India. Buddhism thus came out of its narrow limits and converted itself into a very broad and popular religion of the time, so much so that there was very little difference between the lately-developed Tantric Buddhism and the widespread and more dominant Brahmanism of the Tantric type. No wonder that in course of time Buddhism became a tributary to the immensely vital and eternal Brahmanism, ultimately losing its very entity into the latter's vast expanse.

Interestingly enough, of late some scholars consider this state of affairs as the stage of decline on the part of Buddhism; but our studies lead us to the conclusion that the apparent sign of decline was but the indication of a remarkable and natural change in the course of the evolution or progress of that religion. It did not become weak and

suffer a consequent decline in the true sense of the term, but remained ever vital; and it was but destiny that led it to a reassimilation with another eternal and all-powerful entity *viz.*, Brahmanism. Though Buddhism virtually vanished from the land of its birth, it did not die out altogether; it simply migrated to distant lands and duly established itself there so as to become almost immortal.

However, our thesis seeks to narrate in detail what an important role both the Buddhist Church and Buddhism itself played in the Classical Age. The Clergy which predominated the Church could not keep Buddhism confined to itself and the monasteries. For the religion with its message of love and mercy developed into a dynamic force and penetrated into the abodes of the lay people, whose lively interest on the promotion of Buddhism is vouchsafed by the monumental remains and epigraphical records. Great scholars arose both from the Clergy and from the Laity, and they equally enriched the philosophical literature pertaining to Buddhism. Interchange of missionaries helped the propagation and spread of the religion and its benign message far and wide outside the land of its origin.

We have taken up the theme "Buddhism in the Classical Age" because of the fact that no comprehensive work has so far been made on Buddhism of this period, focussing its development in all its aspects, even though a number of works have come out on the political history of the period which contains incidental references to Buddhism along with other religions and religio-social institutions. We earnestly hope that this work of ours will be able to satisfy the needs of those who would like to have a vivid picture of Buddhism during the Classical Age against the political background for easy comprehension.

Our thesis is divided into six chapters including of course, the necessary Introduction.

Chapter 1 narrates in brief the political history of the period just as the necessary background, since politics plays an important role in the development or otherwise of not only socio-economic but also cultural and religious conditions of a nation's life. The Gupta

emperors were predominant in the earlier part of our period. But even though they were not Buddhists by religion and practised Brahmanical faith, they were not antagonistic to Buddhism and had indeed a tolerant attitude towards that religion, so much so that Buddhism had an equal opportunity to pursue its activities along with Brahmanism and other contemporary religious cults. In fact, Buddhism of this period being predominantly of the liberal Mahāyānist form appears to have been somewhat influenced by Brahmanical ideals, so that in consequence the hitherto wide gap between the two seemingly rival religions became narrower and narrower. Of the three eternal Indian ideals of self-realisation, *viz.*, *Bhakti* (Devotion), *Jñāna* (Knowledge) and *Karma* (Ritual), the *Bhakti* element was very prominent in the period of our discussion, which fact is amply manifested in the remains of architectural monuments and extant images of the time. Though in ruins, numerous Buddhist temples and monasteries have been dug up and we have now countless Buddhist images, many of which rank among the finest examples of plastic art of India. The cultivation of *Jñāna*, which was an essential part of the activities of the Buddhist monastic life from its very inception, became more pronounced during this period and brought about the establishment of great monastic universities like those of Nālandā and Valabhī. The fame of these universities, specially that of Nālandā, spread far and wide and attracted numerous teachers and students from distant countries like China and Tibet. A number of Buddhist teachers, thinkers and philosophers lived and worked in our period; and we have discussed their lives and activities in relevant chapters. The third ideal of *Karma* or ritual was duly cultivated by the Buddhists from the beginning, but it was not so conspicuous as in the concerned epoch.

However, besides the Gupta monarchs there were a number of other ruling families in other parts of India, who directly or indirectly helped the promotion of Buddhism during this period. Of them mention may specially be made of the Vākāṭakas of the Deccan, the Maitrakas of Valabhī, the Pushyabhūti king Harshavardhana of Kanauj and the Khaḍgas of Bengal. The famous rock-cut *Chaityas* of

Ajanta and the temples of Ellora developed into great centres of Buddhist activities in the Deccan during the rule, and under the patronage, of the Vākāṭakas. In the Valabhī kingdom of the Maitrakas there grew up a number of Buddhist monasteries and educational institutions, one of which later on became a full-fledged university of great renown. As the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang asserts, Harshavardhana originally a Śaivite, became a great patron of Buddhism. we come across a line of Buddhist rulers in Bengal with names ending in *Khaḍga*, who evidently patronised Buddhism.

Chapter 2 deals with the most authentic and vivid evidence of the promotion of Buddhism that is supplied by inscriptions and archaeological remains. The latter now known in the forms of images, shrines, cave-temples, *stūpas*, *chaityas*, *etc.*, enable us to visualise the state of Buddhist religious activities of our time. We get additional contemporary accounts of many of these monuments from foreign writers, most prominent of whom were Chinese pilgrims like Fa-Hien, Hiuen Tsang and I-Tsing.

Following the traditional Indian practice of religious toleration which favoured simultaneous growth of diverse religions and religious cults most of the non-Buddhist rulers either directly patronised or were indirectly responsible for its normal promotion. This fact is known from epigraphic records; and we learn that in many cases non-Buddhist rulers made bounteous donations of money and gifts of land to the Buddhist community and its religious establishments. This spirit of liberal philanthropy and patronage stimulated the healthy growth of Buddhist art in the spheres of architecture, sculpture and painting along with that of other religious communities. Even wealthy Hindus often made rich donations and gifts to Buddhist monks alone or sometimes together with Brahmanas. Of course, it is obvious that the Buddhists themselves would generally make such donations and gifts to holy persons of their own community and their own religious establishments.

Such benevolent acts and patronage as known from inscriptional evidence helped the promotion of all types of artistic activities and

consequently evolved what is known as the Gupta Art, which flourished for a long time even after the decline of the Gupta supremacy. Thus, along with Brahmanical ones we have the remains of a good many Buddhist monuments of the time, which comprise mainly *stūpas, chaitya* halls, *vihāras* (or monasteries), railings and pillars, the last two becoming obsolete in course of time. The Buddhist images in stone and metals, though they were rather late in arrival, occupied a prominent place and played equally important roles in the history of the development of the Buddhist Church and that of Buddhist iconography. Besides the common *chaityas*, *vihāras* and *stūpas*, *etc.*, built in the plains, the Buddhists virtually evolved and perfected a new kind of conspicuous architectural monuments. In various hilly tracts they had numerous *vihāras* and chaitya-halls hewn out of live rocks, and many of these cave-temples are splendid specimens of rock-architecture. Notably enough, the Buddhist cave-temples are among the oldest ones in India.

Chapter 3 gives an account of the intercourse between India and China in the matter of propagation and promotion of Buddhism as well as of proper dissemination of the Buddhist practices and the ideal of love and mercy. Though Indian Buddhists established a cordial relation with the Chinese long back, as early as the beginning of the Christian era, and Buddhism was made popular because of the patronising spirit the Chinese royal families and the efficient proselytism of Indian missionaries, the process was revived with a renewed vigour during the period of our survey. The friendly disposition of the Indian rulers and their contemporary Chinese counterparts encouraged Indian missionaries to visit China in a greater number as also to attract a good many Chinese pilgrims into India. The Indian missionaries went to China on the invitation of Chinese monarchs or sometimes on their own initiative. They visited China mainly to propagate Buddhism there or to translate Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese, or for both the purposes. They have unfortunately left very meagre account of their personal lives and activities but whatever little is available has duly been noted along with their works. Among the more prominent Buddhist teachers whose lives and works

have been discussed, the names of Kumārajīva, Saṅghabhūti, Guṇabhadra, Paramārtha, Bodhiruchi, Amoghavajra and Bodhidharma are worth a special mention.

It was during this period that a maximum number of Chinese pilgrims visited India. These pilgrim-scholars who embraced Buddhism undertook in their remarkable religious zeal the long and perilous journey from distant China to India through different Central Asian and peninsular routes, and it is to them that the Indo-Chinese culture is deeply indebted. The aim of the Chinese pilgrims to India was to gain first hand knowledge of Buddhist ecclesiastical rules and customs as also to collect religious scriptures and images. A few of these Buddhist pilgrims have left more or less elaborate accounts of their itinerary, which are mines of information not only about the condition of contemporary Buddhism, but also of the economic and social conditions prevailing in various parts of India during the time of the respective visits of the concerned pilgrims. It is for their enterprises alone that we come to know about some important Buddhist texts which, but for their Chinese translations, would have remained completely unknown, as their Indian originals have long been lost. However, among the illustrious Chinese pilgrims who have left their individual records of the tour and sojourn in India mention may be made of Fa-Hien (399-414 A.D.), Sung-yun (approximately early 6th century A.D.), Hiuen-Tsang (630-644 A.D.), I-Tsing (673 A.D.) and Ou-Kong. Most of them have left elaborate records of the routes they took, the locations of different places of the activities of the Buddha himself and his followers, various contemporary monasteries, as well as the number of monks of different Buddhist sects of various places along with their religious functions, *etc.* These records are immensely helpful to us for tracing out and identify places, specially the obscure ones, that were connected with Buddhism. Following the tracts of the Chinese pilgrims we reach certain destinations, where literature fails to guide us.

Of course, it was not only in China alone that Indian Buddhist missionaries propagated their religion; they extensively carried on their proselytising activities also in countries like Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand (Siam) *etc.* But for obvious reasons we have presently confined our attention mainly to the Chinese front.

Chapter 4 deals with the Indian Buddhist teachers and their works. While Buddhism was flourishing in China by the joint efforts of Indian and Chinese Buddhist scholars, native scholars were not sitting idle in India itself. Encouraged by the favourable dispositions of the rulers at home they produced a vast literature of Philosophy and Logic written from the standpoints of different schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As we see, the study of Philosophy and Logic was much in vogue and the Buddhist scholars did not hesitate to follow the contemporary trend. They did not only engaged themselves in disputes with scholars of other sects, but also wrote eloquent treatises refuting the opponents' viewpoints and establishing those of their own. There arose quite a number of eminent scholars in this period whose works are deemed to be standard ones for all ages to come. Mention may be made of a few of them whose names have become almost immortal in the history of Buddhist Philosophy and Logic. They are: Maitreyanātha, Ārya Asaṅga, Dignāga, Guṇamati, Sthiramati, Chandrakīrti, Śāntideva, Dharmakīrti and others. But as the scholars had utter disregard for publicity, they have left almost no account of their personal lives in their own works nor do we get such account from any other source. Any way, we have gleaned and included in this chapter whatever scanty information is available about the personal lives of a few of these scholars.

Though the Buddhists during the period of our survey were coming out of their isolation and mixing with the general mass more freely, yet the non-Buddhists seem to be still hesitant to accept them into their fold. As such, we get scanty reference to the Buddhists in the contemporary religious or secular literature of the non-Buddhists and even those which we come across are mentioned either with contempt or are ridiculed. But there are also a few works in which the Buddhist monks and nuns are depicted as respectable personages. But whatever be the impression of the common Hindus about the individual members of the Buddhist community, there is no doubt that the Mahāyāna ideal of love and compassion as well as the freedom from narrow cast restrictions among the Buddhists was gradually gaining popularity as is amply manifested in the contemporary literature.

These matters have duly been dealt with in the second part of the present chapter.

Chapter 5 deals with Religion and Philosophy. Religion and Philosophy are inseparably entwined together in India. The Buddhist Church was divided into two distinct sections based on disciplinary and doctrinal rules even within a hundred years of the demise of its founder. The split went on widening with the passage of time, and, as a result, numerous sects and sub-sects grew up within the Buddhist community. But all these sects and sub-sects belonged to either of the two main divisions, *viz.*, the Theravada, otherwise popularly known as Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. The Mahāyānists with their more wide and popular systems of rituals, which ensured the devotees an easier and quicker way of salvation, naturally attracted a major section of the Buddhists community comprising both monks and laymen, and claimed superiority over the Hīnayānists. During our period of survey, Mahāyāna was on the ascendancy, cornering the Hīnayānists almost out of the country. The Mahāyānists' claim of superiority was based on what they believed to be their more liberal ideals of spiritual attainment. For the Hīnayānists the ultimate goal of spiritual attainment was only Arhathood and that highest stage could be attained by one's own self and by one's own efforts, and there was no consideration for others. The Mahāyānists disparaged this Hīnayāna ideal as a selfish motive and proclaimed, on the contrary, what to speak of Arhathood, monks and laymen alike could attain even the Buddhahood by extreme self-sacrifice and by observing a number of *Pāramitā's* (Perfect qualities) like *Dāna* (Charity) and *Karuṇā* (Compassion) *etc.*; *Karuṇā* was to the Mahāyānists the most importaant of all *Pāramitās*, which inspired them even to deny 'Salvation' so long other living beings were not emancipated. The Mahāyānists considered an aspirant for Buddhahood duly observing *Pāramitās* as a Bodhisattva, who was destined to become a Buddha in the long run. In fact, as per the Mahāyāna thinking every Mahāyānist was a Bodhisattva or a potential Buddha, and because of their spirit of extreme self-abnegation the Bodhisattvas were more and more venerated by the people, and were eventually deified. Thus, even in the

early Gupta period we hear of a number of Bodhisattvas like *Avalokitesvara*, the Compassion Incarnate, and *Prajñapāramitā*, the Knowledge par Excellence, who were duly worshipped as Godheads. The pantheon of the Mahāyānists went on expanding with the incorporation and introduction of newer and newer divinities, paving the way to a full-fledged Tantric Buddhist pantheon.

Chapter 6 or the concluding chapter is the one in which the data comprising the internal and external evidences as collected in the preceding chapters have been briefly surveyed and conclusion drawn thereof. We have shown in it how in the Classical Age, covering some three centuries and a half, Buddhism had a gradual growth and development from virtually an obscure 'local' religion confined to a comparatively small area to what may well be called a 'universal' religion, encompassing almost half of the eastern hemisphere. We have also made an attempt to dispell the general belief that Buddhism in this period was in a state of decline, and shown, on the contrary, that the apparent signs of decline were illusory and that the Buddhism during this period was in flourishing state.

Lastly, it is my pleasant duty to thank Prof. Mahesh Tiwary, of the Dept. of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, who encouraged and persuaded me to submit the thesis which was lying with me almost complete for a long time, which I could not submit due to my change of residence from Calcutta to Delhi, and some other reasons. My heartfelt gratitude is also due to Prof. A.N. Lahiri of the Dept. of Ancient Indian History and Culture, University of Calcutta, who volunteered to act as my guide and help me in every respect in forwarding the thesis. His valuable suggestions and occasional constructive criticisms are matters but for which it would not have been possible for me to complete the work and for which I shall ever be grateful to him.

My thanks go to all other persons whoever have helped me in some way or other, rendering physical or moral support. My grateful thanks are also due to Shri S.P. Singhal, of M/s Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi and his staff members, who published the book in record time and to my satisfaction.

SUDHA SENGUPTA

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30. Apsaras—Sīgiriya (Śrī Laṅkā)

Transliteration Table

ā	ा (आ)
ī	ी (ई)
ū	(ऊ)
ṛ or ṛi	(ऋ)
ṅ	(ङ)
ch or c	(च)
chh or ch	(छ)
ñ	(ञ)
ṭ	(ट)
ṭha	(ठ)
ḍa	(ड)
ḍha	(ढ)
ṇ	(ण)
ś or sh	(श)
ṣ	(ष)
ṁ	(ं, ँ)

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1
Historical Background

It is for the sake of a clear understanding of the subjectmatter of our thesis, 'Buddhism in the Classical Age,' that we would first give here a brief historical sketch of the concerned period, *viz.*, c. 400 to 750 A.D., which saw the culmination and gradual decline of two imperial houses, the Early Guptas and the Pushyabhūtis under Harshavardhana. A number of widely scattered principalities also rose and disappeared during the concerned period.*

It began with the glorious days of the Early Gupta monarchs. With the lifting of the curtain we find Chandragupta II, the worthy son and successor of the mighty Samudragupta, occupying the throne of Magadha, consolidating and expanding his sovereign power over and beyond a vast empire founded by his grandfather and extended by his father.

Chandragupta II was an equally an able monarch and ruled for a considerably long time. He, as also his successors, professed Brahmanism. He was, in fact, a devoted follower of Bhagavatism or Vaishnavism. But he was not intolerant to other contemporary religions like Buddhism and Jainism. In the time of Chandragupta II and his successors the traditional Indian principle of religious toleration was practised with a great amount of impartiality. And this generous religious toleration is typified by the appointment of officers professing other faiths like the Śaiva Āmrakārdava and the Buddhist Vīrasena Śāba by Chandragupta himself, who was a staunch Vaishnava. Naturally enough, various religions and religious cults equally flourished side by side in their own respective spheres in a friendly and co-operating manner. All types of creative and cultural

activities as manifested in contemporary literature, art and architecture were duly encouraged and patronised even though they were fostered by people following different religious faiths. Religious toleration went so far that we see in this period members of the same family adopting different religions and at the same time living together in peaceful co-existence.

Of course, Brahmanism being the State religion duly attained the most predominant position, and consequently cast its overall influence over other religions -including Buddhism. Now, Buddhism at the time was mainly Mahāyānist in character, and with gradual relaxation of the rigidity so inherent in Hīnayānism it became liberal enough to come closer to Brahmanism. Thus, of the three main ways of the ideal of self-realisation, *viz.*, *Jñāna*, *Bhakti* and *Karma*—the ideal of *Bhakti* became prominently manifested in this period, which found expression in various architectural monuments and beautiful images. *Jñāna*, or the cultivation of knowledge, which was an important part of the religious life of the Buddhists throughout its history, became more pronounced in the classical works produced by various eminent scholars, who flourished in the period under review. The erstwhile not-so-prominent monastic abodes of Nālandā, Valabhī *etc.*, were transformed into big Universities and following them, a number of other Universities also sprang up in subsequent period, whose fame drew scholars not only from the whole of India, but also from far off countries like China, Tibet, Ceylon, *etc.* The last one, *viz.*, *Karma*, in the form of rituals, was gradually developed and consequently culminated into Vajrayāna, with its various 'mystic practices', which became the predominant factor, not only of Buddhism but of all religions of that period.

Bhakti or Devotion of the Buddhists was manifest in the beautiful *Vihāras* or monasteries and the images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, which excelled in beauty the previous ones; and later ones also were in no comparison with them. The development of Mahāyāna and the introduction of various gods and goddesses into its pantheon also helped a great deal in the development of Buddhist iconography. In fact, Indian plastic art reached its zenith during the

Gupta period and its influence surpassed its historical and geographical limits. 'Culture was never more creative than during this period.' The main centre of Gupta art was Sārnath. Numerous Buddhist figures discovered from Mathurā, Sārnath, and other parts of the Gupta empire, bear testimony to the superiority of the Gupta art. The various artistic expressions in places outside the Gupta sphere clearly manifest the influence that the artist of the Gupta dominion exerted. And the exellence of the Gupta School continued for a considerable time till its was virtually supplanted by the subsequent and distinctly characteristic Pāla School of Art.

The legends of the coins of Chandragupta II bear for him the epithet *Vikramāditya.* As such, he is identified with the traditional 'Vikramāditya Śakāri' of Ujjain.[1] In literature also *Vikramaditya* is referred to as ruling in Pāṭaliputra as well as in Ujjain. In fact, according to Mallinātha, the great commentator, the date of the famous Buddhist logician Dignāga, who is known to have been one of the 'Nine Jewels' together with Kālidāsa, adorning the court of Vikramāditya,—conforms with the time of Chandragupta II. Many other Buddhist teachers flourished in this period and were patronised by the Gupta and succeeding rulers. Mention may be made of the great scholars like Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Āryadeva and such others. Details of their contributions in India's scholarly life will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

A number of inscriptions of the period go to prove that people from all classes of the Society, from royal officers to laymen, made bounteous gifts to the Buddhist order. Fa-Hien who visited India during the palmy days of the Gupta rule, gives a glowing description of the Gupta administrative system as well as the condition of Buddhism prevailing in the country. Hiuen-Tsang who came during the declining period of the Guptas and the rising of the Pushyabhūti emperor Harshavardhana, mentions no less than six kings, probably all of whom belonged to the royal Gupta dynasty of the later days, who were patrons of the great monastic University of Nālandā. Indeed, this age was one of the successful epochs of spreading Indian religion and culture in almost the whole of Asia through the interchange of missionaries. Buddhist missionaries used to go to Ceylon,

Burma, China, Central Asia, *etc.*, from a very early date to propagate Buddhism in those countries, but the inflow of pilgrims, particularly Chinese, was revived with greater enthusiasm in this time and thenceforward there was a constant interchange of Buddhist missionaries between India and China. It is mentioned that at the beginning of the sixth century A.D., the number of Indians in China was upwards of three thousand and the Buddhist temples were more than thirteen hundred.[2]

The Imperial Guptas held sway-over a vast area, but the neighbouring area of Mahārāshṭra was being ruled by another powerful family of the Vākāṭakas—with whom the Guptas had matrimonial alliances. The caves of Ajantā, and Ellorā, famous for their exquisite paintings and sculptures, were executed under the patronage of the Vākāṭaka rulers who were great friends of the abbots of the Ajanta monastery. Kumāragupta I, the son and successor of Chandragupta II, as the inscriptions prove, was benevolent to the Buddhist community.

But sometime after the death of Kumaragupta I the position of Buddhism in the country remained for a time shrouded in darkness because of the unstable political conditions as is evident from the following course of events.

The last powerful king of the Imperial Gupta dynasty was Skandagupta, the son and successor of Kumaragupta I, whose reign period was full of disturbances due to the wars with two formidable enemies, *viz.*, the otherwise unknown Pushyamitras and the Hūṇas. From this time onwards there were frequent attacks by different adversaries, and the feeble hands of the later Gupta rulers could not effectively hold intact their extensive empire. As a result, portions of their dominions slipped out to form independent principalities.

The Maitraka rulers of Valabhī in the Saurashtra area, originally feudatories of the Guptas, gradually changed their epithet from *Sāmanta*, to *Mahāsāmanta Mahārāja* or simply *Mahārāja*, signifying their gradual attainment of different of degrees independence. The Valabhī rulers were noted patrons of Buddhism. A number of ladies of their ruling house became nunsband their relatives enjoying royal status

made liberal donations to the Buddhist institutions on their behalf. Hiuen Tsang speaks very highly of king Śilāditya Dharmāditya of Malawa, who ruled about sixty years before his arrival and who was the uncle of the then ruling king of Valabhī; he credits him with the building of a Buddhist temple, 'extremely artistic in structure and ornament', in which there were images of the 'Seven Buddhas'. Then, as Hiuen Tsang asserts, the same king Śilāditya held a great religious assembly, apparently a Buddhist one and possibly like that of Harshavardhana, to which 'Buddhists were summoned from all quarters'.

As mentioned above, the Vākāṭakas were matrimonially allied to the Imperial Guptas,—Prabhāvatīguptā, the daughter of Chandragupta II being married to the Vākāṭaka prince Rudrasena II. The marriage alliance might have been made with a political purpose in order to avert the Gupta incursions into their territories. Of course, in their earlier records the Vākāṭakas are mentioned with humbler titles like *Mahārāja* as against the superior one of *Mahārājādhirāja* adopted by the Gupta rulers. There is also a tradition that Prabhavatigupta's son Pravarasena II had left the charge of administration to his maternal grandfather Chandragupta II.[3] However, the Vākāṭakas, though not subordinate to the Imperial Guptas became more powerful and gradually extended their dominions so as to include Kośala, Mālava, Mekala, Lāṭa and Avanti—all of which were once included into the vast Gupta empire.[4] Eastern Malwa, was, however, recovered by the later Guptas after the death of its ruler Yaśodharman and was retained by them upto the reign of Harshavardhana. A portion of Western Malwa was included into the dominions of the Maitrakas of Valabhī, and another went to the Maukharis of Kanauj who became powerful enough during the declining days of the Guptas.

However, to continue the Gupta episode, Skandagupta's successor was his brother Purugupta who seems to have assumed the title of *Vikramāditya*, as indicated by the legend of some of his coins. J. Allan identifies him with the King Vikramāditya of Ayodhyā, father of Bālāditya, who was a patron of Buddhism through the influence of

Vasubandhu.[5] Purugupta's son Bālāditya, alias Narasiṁhagupta, Bālāditya, has been sought to be identified with Bālāditya, the subduer of the Hūṇa king Mihirakula, as mentioned by Hiuen Tsang. But this identification does not gain ground owing to the disagreement of the names of his predecessors and the successors as mentioned by Hiuen Tsang and as occurring in inscriptions. Moreover, as we see, the dates of the two Bālādityas, *viz.*, Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya and the Bālāditya mentioned by Hiuen Tsang, do not tally. In fact, the existence of a number of Bālādityas referred to in inscriptions and literature make it very difficult for a specific identification. The Bālāditya as mentioned by Hiuen Tsang was probably the son and successor of Tathāgatagupta, and father of Vajra, a noted patron of the monastic University of Nālandā. But Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya, on the contray, was the son of Purugupta, and the father of one Kumāragupta, an illustrious patron of Buddhism according to a Sāranāth inscription. Any way, Budhagupta, the uncle of Narasiṁhagupta, Bālāditya, was a patron of Buddhism. Of the successors of Budhagupta, who, according to stray epigraphic references, are known to have ruled here and there, Hiuen Tsang speaks of Vishṇugupta, son of Kumāragupta II, Bhānugupta, Tathāgatagupta, Bālāditya and Vajra as patrons of the Nālandā monastery.

However, it is not exactly known when Bengal came under the Gupta rule; but that it happened at quite an early date is indicated by the fact that Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti, an important administrative unit of Bengal, was under the Guptas from a very early date. And even at a later date the same Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti was within the dominion of Budhagupta. But another administrative unit of Bengal, *viz.*, Samataṭa, was out side the Gupta dominion at the time of Samudragupta; and it was incorporated into it in later days. In the sixth century A.D. a certain Mahārāja Vainyagupta, who seems to have been a scion of the Gupta dynasty, was ruling at Samataṭa, one of whose officers had made a donation to some Buddhist community, as recorded in an inscription. It is said that the illustrious abbot of the Nālandā monastery, Paṇḍit Śīlabhadra, under whom Hiuen Tsang studied during his stay at Nālandā, was a scion of the royal dynasty of Samataṭa, but we are not sure if it was of the Gupta origin.

In the early part of the seventh century A.D., Gauḍa, or the North-western part of Bengal, was under the rule of a powerful king Śaśāṅka, who is said to have treacherously killed Rājyavardhana, the elder brother of Harshavardhana, and hence is considered to have been an astute foe of the latter. As such, Hiuen Tsang in his records describes Śaśāṅka as a persecutor of Buddhism and accuses him of uprooting the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya and demolishing Buddhist monasteries. But Hiuen Tsang's own account of the condition of Buddhism at Karṇasuvarṇa, the very capital of the said persecutor Śaśāṅka, as well as recent excavations at Chiruti, identified with Karṇasuvarṇa itself, provide us with contrary evidence. Any way, during the latter half of the seventh century A.D. a line of Buddhist kings with names ending in—*khaḍaga* and, as such, known as the Khaḍga dynasty, was the ruling power in Bengal. However, we get a good deal of information about the condition of Buddhism in Bengal from the writings of the Chinese pilgrims. Fa-Hien's account of Bengal is rather very scanty, since he did not cross the Ganges, and himself did not see much of the country. But that is not the case of the report of Hiuen Tsang, who did amply compensate the deficiency of Fa-Hien's inadequate information. We shall duly deal with the former's account of Buddhism in Bengal in a later chapter.

In the early seventh century A.D., Northern India came under the suzerainty of another powerful monarch, *viz.*, Harshavardhana of the Pushyabhūti family. In him Buddhism seems to have found a great patron. Harshavardhana appears to have been connected with the later Guptas, as his grandmother was one Mahasenaguptā, who might well have been the sister or daughter of Mahasenagupta, Though Harshavardhana originally belonged to Thanesvara, he became the king of Kanauj in a peculiar circumstance. His sister's husband Grahavarmaṇ, the Kanauj king, who had no issue, was killed in an encounter, as a result of which the throne of Kanauj fell vacant without any other legal claimant, and Harshavardhana had to occupy it. Harshavardhana, avowedly a great patron of Buddhism, according to Hiuen Tsang, is neither depicted as such by Bāna, his biographer, nor in his own inscription or seals. In fact, he is styled as

Paramamāheśvara, 'a great devotee of Maheśvara-Śiva'. The testimony of the great Chinese pilgrim, however, cannot easily be brushed aside, even though we may leave some allowance for exaggerations. It might be possible that in later days, Harshavardhana developed, for some reason or other, a favourable disposition towards Buddhism and came forward to uphold its cause even at the risk of antagonising people of other religious faiths.

However, as we are told, the most important event during the reign of Harshavardhana was convening of the Great Buddhist Assembly at Kanauj, in which in the presence of the people of different religions special honour was bestowed to the image of the Buddha and to the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang; and this action on the part of the king enraged a class of people and made them hostile towards him. Hiuen Tsang was also a witness to the quinquennial assembly at Prayaga (modern Allahabad), in which great honour was shown to the Buddha, the Sun and Śiva, and all the treasures of the royal exchequer were distributed in charity. This Assembly, known as *Mahāmokshaparīshad,* was the sixth during the reign of Harshavardhana and is said to have been continuing from the days of the *Vedas*. Harashvardhana, like Aśoka, is credited to have built numerous *stūpas* and monasteries along the banks of the Ganges as well as in places considered sacred to the Buddhists, even though none of them has so far come to light. Like Aśoka, Harshavardhana, too, tried to practise *Ahiṁsā* by forbidding slaughter of living beings and eating flesh under death penalty. Following Aśoka's instance he installed charitable institutions on roadsides to provide food, drink and medicines for poor and needy travellers. Then, one of his outstanding contributions to the cause of Buddhism was the gift of a magnificent *Vihāra* at Nālandā which was covered with brass-plates, and other endowments made to the monastic University there. All these do not of course mean that religion overshadowed the worldly activities of Harshavardhana: he made ambitious expeditions against a number of neighbouring states, though unfortunately many of them were not successful, as for example, those against the Chālukyan king Pulakesin II and the Gauḍa king Śaśāṅka. The results of

some other expeditions of Harshavardhana like that in Valabhi, is not known.

As vouchsafed by the extensive epigraphic evidence and the records of the Chinese pilgrims, Buddhism in the Classical Age duly retained its former glories and in some places received greater popular support and adoration. The north-western borders of India was studded with Buddhist monuments, though most of them are in ruins to-day. By the time of the Arab invasion in Sindh, as its written accounts indicate, Buddhism was on the wane, though there were good many monks and devotees in the north-western region. We are told that when the Arab invader Muhammad came to the modern Hyderabad area in Sindh a section of the local Buddhist priests 'who were already carrying on treasonable correspondence openly helped Muhammad with provisions'. In other towns also a section of the Buddhists helped the Muhammadans, though many of them fought against the invaders.

Buddhism had also a considerable following in the south, even though it did not enjoy as illustrious a position as in the days of the Sātavahānas and the Ikshvākus. As already noted, Buddhism had its advocates in the Vākāṭakas in central Deccan.

Another branch of the Vākāṭakas were ruling in Aurangabad District of Maharashtra, whose members are credited to have been 'lovers of learning and patrons of art and literature.' They continued to rule in this area upto the sixth-seventh centuries A.D. and probably patronised Buddhism, for it was under their patronage that the later group of the Ajanta caves with their beautiful sculptures and paintings was excavated, as known from a number of inscriptions of the Ajanta caves.

In the Western Deccan, where the Bhojas, Traikūṭakas and Kalchuris were reigning, Buddhism probably did not enjoy any royal favour, except from one Mahārāja Chandravarmaṇ, supposedly of the Bhoja dynasty, who is stated to have presented a piece of land to a Buddhist monastery at Śivapura near Goa, in a fifth century copperplate inscription from Goa. Similarly, we are told by a Kanheri

copper-plate of the latter part of the fifth century that a *Chaitya* at the Kanheri monastery was constructed during the 'increasing rule of the Traikūṭakas'.

In the Andhra country the *Stūpas* of Amarāvatī, Nāgārjunakoṇḍā and Jagayyapeta were still being worshipped in this period. A line of kings belonging to Ānandagotra family ruled in Andhra in the fourthfifth centuries, and one of their princes, Dāmodaravarmaṇ, seems-to have been a Buddhist.

The Western Gangas of Mysore who traced their descent from the Ikshvākus (probably of Nāgārjunakoṇḍā) were apparently not well disposed towards Buddhism, for King Harivarman of this family (c. 450-460 A.D.) 'donated a village to a Brahmana who vanquished his Buddhist opponent in philosophical disputation'.[6] But another descendant of the same family, Mādhava III, 'made grants to Brāhamaṇs, Jainas and Buddhists' inspite of being a Śaiva. The Cholas were hostile to the Buddhists, and that is known from Hiuen Tsang's statements. But interestingly enough, an earlier Chola king Achyuta or Achyutavarmaṇ, is said to have been a Buddhist, as mentioned by Buddhadatta, a famous Pali writer and a contemporary of Buddhaghosha.

In the further south, the Kāñchi area which produced eminent Buddhist scholars like Āryadeva, Dignāga, Dharmapāla, and others, was in the seventh century under the rule of the Pallava king Mahendravarmaṇ I, who wrote a farce, *Mattavilāsa Prahasana*, ridiculing the follies of the Śaiva and Buddhist ascetics. It, however, mentions a '*Rāja Vihāra*', established by two earlier Pallava rulers, *viz.*, Buddhavaraman and Aśokavarmaṇ. Jainism was in this area more prominent than Buddhism.

Buddhism was becoming more and more popular in countries outside India during this period. Indian art fostered by Buddhistic patronage also gained considerable popularity abroad, and the ideals for that was the Gupta art of Northern India and the artistic masterpieces of Amaravati and Nāgārjunakoṇḍā of the south. The contemporary sculptures of the Far Eastern countries like Indonesia,

Malayasia and Cambodia exhibit a close affinity to those of the Gupta period. The paintings of the Hōryūji temple of Japan clearly show the influence of the Ajantā paintings. The impact of Buddhism, as we shall see in later chapters, is traceable in far off places like Central Asia and China, during the Classical Age, c. 400 to 750 A.D.

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2

Inscriptions and Monuments

Even though early Indian history is reconstructed mainly from the evidence furnished by the Epics, Purāṇas and various other religious and secular texts, we cannot over estimate the importance of Archaeology in this respect; for, narrations of historical events in non-historical texts are generally blended with both facts and fiction. Thus, the authenticity of literary information is taken for granted, when it is corroborated by epigraphic and numismatic records. In fact, we are sometimes reluctant to accept the existence and rule of a king of the historical period since the time when writing came in vogue, unless his name appears in an inscription or coin.

The case of the history of Religion is not exactly the same. We do not get much information of a religious nature from epigraphic and numismatic records. Various literary texts, both religious and secular, provide us with the main evidence for the reconstruction of the history of a religion. Of course, epigraphy is not altogether barren as the source of information: indeed inscriptions in many cases do provide us with some information about the place and period of the existence of certain religious sects and their establishments. Inscriptions often record the grants of lands, money and material by kings or wealthy people for the benefit of some religious sects and their temples or *vihāras*—of course, mostly to announce the glory, munificence and importance of the donors.

Before exploring the literary evidence for the knowledge of the precise condition of Buddhism in the Classical Age, we would like to explore the field of archaeology in this respect, and see how a critical

and technical study of various inscriptions of the period yields necessary results and how the exploration of monumental remains and anecdotes and written records about them help us to know where and precisely when Buddhist sects flourished during our period of study.

Even though there was not such a great patron of Buddhism like Aśoka in our period, inscriptions and monumental remains provide us with ample evidence of munificent grants, donations and gifts that Buddhist sects and their establishments received from royal patrons, wealthy people and even commoners with meagre resources.

For a suitable reconstruction of the history of the Buddhist church in this period, we are fortunate enough to have a considerable number of inscriptions and archaeological remains in the form of images, shrines, *stūpas*, cave–temples, *chaityas etc.*, which enable us to reconstruct the history of the religion almost without much difficulty. Thus reconstructed history may be embellished with greater details when supplemented by the records of the Chinese pilgrims and contemporary indigenous literary accounts.

Buddhism was not a State religion in this period; a few minor ruling princes of our region or other had some regard for it. But following the general Indian tradition of religious toleration, which favoured healthy growth of diverse rival religious sects side by side, most of the Indian kings often patronised other religions along with their own. A study of the archaeological remains shows that as, on the one hand, the Buddhist kings made religious grants to other non-Buddhist communities, in the same manner non-Buddhist rulers also stretched their bounteous hands to the Buddhist sect. And this spirit of sympathetic co-operation stimulated the art, architecture and sculpture of this period to rise to such a high level of perfection and loveliness, invoking unstinted admiration of a great many people for many centuries. Though the Gupta kings did not enjoy political supremacy much later than the end of the 5th century A.D., the era of great artistic activities which began with them–lasted much longer, even upto the 7th-8th centuries A.D. And in fact, the influence of the

Gupta art spread far beyond the geographical boundaries of the Gupta empire.

The Buddhist monuments are mainly (1) the Pillars (2) the Stupas, (3) the Rails, (4) the Chaityas or prayer halls and (5) the Vihāras or monastic abodes.[1] The images, which play a great part in the history of the development of the Buddhist church, were introduced somewhat later. In the hilly tracts, the Buddhist establishments were hewn out of living rocks which are splendid specimens of rock-architecture. In fact, the earliest and the major number of the cave-temples of India are Buddhist. And though in Buddhist literature the mode of preparing *Stūpas* is suggested by the Buddha Himself,[2] and the worship of *Stūpas* commenced immediately after his demise, it did not become the fashion of the day until the days of Asoka. In the *Mahāparinibhāna-Sutta* it is said that after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, a dispute arose among the leaders of the Republics of the Mallas, Koliyas, Śākyas *etc*., for the possession of the relics of the Buddha's body, and at last they were divided among eight chiefs, each of whom built a *Stūpa* over the relic he received and started worshipping it.[3] During the life-time of the Buddha, his religion was concentrated only within the boundaries of Madhyadeśa or the Middle country. It was during the reign of the Emperor Aśoka, the greatest exponent of Buddhism, that the religion gained a wide recognition. Aśoka erected numerous *Stūpas* and pillars all over India, expecially at the places associated with some or other momorable event in the life of the Buddha, which makes it easier to recognise those places even after such a long interval of time. The fabulous number of eighty-four thousand *Stūpas* erected by Aśoka in place of seven out of the eight *Stūpas* erected over the relics of the Buddha may be incredible, but that they were numerous, may well be true. And the places around these *Stūpas* must have been great centres of Buddhism for a few more centuries, at least upto the fourth century A.D., when the building of new *Stūpas* became lesser in practice, and the major number of *Stūpas* assigned to this period is regarded as either enlargement, renovation or alteration of the older ones. Pillars and railings also became rare; and railings encircling *Stūpas*, as were

in vogue from the earliest period of Buddhist architecture, also became rarer and probably the only stone railing ascribed to this period is one of the two sets found at Bodh-Gaya, the older one being of the time of Aśoka and made of the same kind of polished sand stone peculiarly pertaining to all Aśokan monoliths. The more popular Buddhist architectures of the period under review are the Vihāras or a group of monastic abodes for the residence of monks and *Chaityas* or prayer halls enshrining *Stūpas* or the images of the Buddha. Sometimes figures of the Buddha were carved on the *Stūpas* inside the *Chaityas*. These *Vihāras* and *Chaityas*, though gained popularity and increased in number, were not a novelty of this age. The Vihāras were used to be made by the Buddhists from the earliest period of the Buddhist organisation-from the life time of its founder who himself used to live in various *Vihāras*. *Chaitya*-halls were introduced somewhat later. With the rise and development of Mahāyāna, *Chaitya*-halls became more and more popular and the cultural atmosphere and the patronising spirit of the rulers encouraged the Buddhists of this age to revive their intellectual activities, particularly in the art and architecture of the *Chaityas* and *Vihāras*. Lastly, the growing popularity of Mahāyāna, and the gradual introduction of various gods and goddesses into its pantheon enlarged the family of Buddhists gods to a considerable extent. This crowded pantheon rendered inspiration and ample scope for the display of skills to the sculptors of this age, whose productions are really a treasure not for that age alone but also for the subsequent ages. The archaeologist's spades have brought to light various remains of monuments of those forgotten far off days, and we are struck with wonder and admiration to think how the men of that remote past could have built such magnificent structures with such delicate ornamentations or the graceful figures of divine, semi-divine and human being with loveliness, when none of the modern implements were available and the artists had to do everything with their bare hands or with very meagre implements.

We shall begin our survey of the state of Buddhism of this period from the extreme north-west of India.

The importance of the north-western region of India in the history of religion is no less noteworthy than in the history of Politics. Buddhism surpassed the border region of India through the proselytising efforts of Aśoka. Three inscriptions found from Swat[4] corroborate the statement of the Chinese travellers that Buddhism lingered on in this region at least upto the 7th century A.D. These incriptions giving only some Buddhist *Sūtras* do not furnish any historical information, but they are very interesting from the literary stand point. Their importance, however, lies in the fact that they provide evidence of living Buddhism there.

It was Aśoka the great who was responsible for the introduction of Buddhism in the Gandhara region. Here he had built several *Stūpas* which were visited by the Chinese pilgrims some centuries later. After Aśoka, the region came under a number of foreign rulers of whom not many were favourable to Indian religions and the religion could have easily rooted out from its soil. But it had the good fortune of shortly having another great patron in the Kushān king Kaṇishka who upheld its cause and employed the best of his efforts in its further development. Kaṇishka, too, must have repaired the older *Stūpas* and built some new ones in this region; and it is said that during his time Gandhara became a great centre of Buddhism. The rulers who governed this place after Kaṇishka, did not show much interest in Buddhism, so the Buddhist centres of the area were naturally gradually fading out. But that the religion of Gautama did not totally extinguish in these places at least upto the 7th century is proved by the records of the Chinese travellers as well as by archaeological evidence. The Dharmarajikā Vihāra, established by Kaṇishka, was seen by Fa-Hien in the 5th century in a flourishing state and he speaks very highly of it. Hiuen-tsang, who came to India in the early part of the 7th century, reports to have seen numerous *Stūpas* and monasteries in this region; and though they were in a somewhat decayed condition, their glory and sanctity were not much diminished. He is said to have seen many miracles in some of the places connected with the Buddha. Archaeological reports tell us that *Stūpas* and other buildings continued to be erected around the Dharmarajika *Stūpa* from

the 4th to the 7th centuries A.D. The Bhamala monastery in Taxila owes its origin not earlier than the 4th or 5th century A.D. On the tiled pavement in front of the western steps of the main *Stūpa* at *Bhāmala* is depicted the *Dharmachakra* design and various other symbols like Swastika, lotus, rosettes, concentric circles, quarter-foils of Pipal leaves, crosses, spirals, double-axes, *etc.*,[5] which had probably some Buddhistic association. A few decades later, the whole of this region must have been set on fire, apparently by the ruthless Hūṇa invaders Toramāṇa and Mihirakula, as the traces of incendiarism on the sites and some half-burnt brich-bark manuscripts written in upright Gupta characters of the 5th century A.D., found from Jaulian, clearly proves[6]. other Buddhist establishments like Mohra-Moradu, Kalvan *etc.*, grew around the Dharmarājikā *Stūpa* at Taxila.

In Sind, the brick- built *Stūpa* of Kahu-jo-dāro near Mirpurkhas contains ornamentations and patterns resembling those at Dhamekh *Stūpa* and other at Sārnāth and Mathurā. Clay tablets containing the well-known Buddhist formula 'Ye dharmā—' *etc.*, in 7th-8th centuries characters go to prove that Buddhism still had its hold over this place. The *Stūpa* named Sudharanjo-dāro near Tando-Mohamed-Khan, of which unfortunately nothing but the square plinth is extant, is also assigned to about the 5th-6th centuries A.D., from the evidence of its carved bricks lying scattered.

That there was a network of Buddhist institutions with a considerable number of devotees on the Kabul valley and the Punjab region of India from the remotest period of its history is further proved by the inscriptions found in the neighbouring places. An inscription on a stone-slab from Kura in the Salt Range records[7] the erection of a Vihāra 'for the congregation of monks of Bhagavat Buddha by the lord of the Vihāra-Roṭṭa Siddha Vṛiddhi, the son of Roṭṭa Jaya Vṛiddhi whose name was honoured by the lord of Nascira, for the benefit of the relatives of the donor and the queens, princes and princesses, of Mahārāja Toramāṇa Sāha Jauvala for the acceptance of the teachers (*Āchāryas*) of the Mahīśāsakas.' The characters resemble the older Buddhist nail-headed inscriptions of the Gupta period with some peculiarities. The Toramāṇa mentioned in this

inscription is probably not the famous Hūṇa king of the same name, who was rather a staunch antagonist to all Indian religions-not to speak of Buddhism-but might be some other independent king bearing the same name and ruling over some territory in North-Western India, about whom nothing more is known. A remnant of Buddhism in Punjab is found in an inscribed brass image of the Buddha found out from Fatehpur (Kangra District) approximately of the 6th century A.D., which records[8] the pious gift of the Buddhist friar Dhârmapriya together with his brother Dharmasiṁha and with his preceptor of the same name (*viz.*, Dharmasiṁha) and 'with all sentient beings.'

Kashmir was a great centre of Buddhism of the Sarvāstivāda school of the Hīnayāna sect from the early period of its advent and its later history is depicted by literary as well as architectural evidence. According to *Mahāvaṁsa*. of the thirteen missionaries sent by Aśoka to preach Buddhism in different countries, one named Majjhantika was sent to Kashmir and Gandhāra. The venue of the Buddhist council held under the auspices of Kaṇiska was Kashmir, according to some opinion, including that of Hiuen Tsang. Kalhana's *Rājataraṅginī*. the famous chronicle of Kashmir, tells us that Buddhism and Hinduism flourished side by side in Kashmir during the reign of the great king Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa (699-735), when the *Vihāras* and *Chaityas* of Parihāsapura (mod. paraspur) and the *Vihāra* of Huvishkapura (mod. Uskara) were built. But it may be mentioned here incidentally that the *Vihāra* of Uskara must have been built at least some time before that, because Hiuen Tsang, who visited Kashmir a few decades earlier and lived there for two years, is said to have spent a night in the 'Huskara-Vihāra', which must be the same as that at Huvishkapura. Another monastery mentioned by the pilgrim was the Jayendra Vihāra. The Chinese pilgrim is said to have seen about 100 monasteries in Kashmir, but Wu-K'ong who lived at the same place about a century later, reports to have seen about 300 monasteries[9]. The most remarkable early Buddhist remains at Kashmir are unearthed at Harwan near Srinagar. It occupies a lovely situation on a slope facing the beautiful Dal lake, with a mountain range on its background. The remains reveal a large Buddhist area with a *Stūpa* on its coutryard, a *Chaitya*-hall and some

monastic abodes around them. The Chaitya-hall which occupies a prominent position on the highest part of the plateau is one of the rare specimens of the type in northern India, bearing remarkable affinity to these of the rock-cut *Chaitya*-halls in the southern parts of India. Numerous terracotta plaques found at the site are unique specimens of Indian art. As ovserved by percy Brown, 'the remains at Harwan indicate that the memorable impact of diverse historical cultures, which took place in this part of Asia in the early centuries of the first millennium, also had repercussions on the arts of Kashmir.[10]' And though we have hitherto found out no inscription from Kashmir, the deficiency is more than compensated by the monumental discovery of a number of Sanskrit manuscripts of various Buddhist texts from *Stūpa* in Gilgit, written in characters of 5th-6th centuries A.D. These manuscripts are supposed to be the earliest ones so far discovered in India, and were hitherto unknown to have existed except in their Tibetan tranlations.[11]

For the region intervening between the north-western countries and Mathurā, we have practically no archaeological material to depict the story of the condition of Buddhism in these regions. Hiuen Tsang, of course, reports to have seen a number of Buddhist institutions and also Buddhist devotees in this region. The Mathura region was a great centre of Jainism as well as Buddhism from a very early date, the form of Buddhism being mainly the Sarvāstivāda as it is associated with the name of Upagupta, the religious teacher of Aśoka, who is said to have had great success as a missionary in this region and converted numerous people; An inscription of the time of Kanishka denotes that the Sammitiyas also had a place there. Huien Tsang is said to have seen the followers of Mahāyāna also. The Chinese travellers saw about twenty Buddhist monasteries and a large number of devotees at Mathurā. But unfortunately no remains of any monastery have so far been found out in this area, though numerous Buddhist figures, some of which are inscribed, found from this region prove that at one time the place was a flourishing centre of Buddhism. The sculptures of Mathurā had a peculiar type of their own and the Mathurā School of Art, which grew simultaneously with that of Gandhāra, is regarded

as the connecting link between the Gandhāra and the Gupta School of Art. Some Buddhist figures of the early Gupta period hailing from Mathurā clearly manifest the vestiges of the older form of art mingled with the glimpses of the advancing Gupta art.[12] The Boston Museum of America has in its collection some images of the Buddha from Mathurā belonging to the Gupta period.[13] Two inscriptions insised on the pedestals of two standing Buddha images from Mathurā have been found out, which, on paleographic grounds, are to be placed at an interval of about a century. These are regarded as the latest inscriptions so far found in this region. The former, ascribed to the middle of the 5th century A.D. is inscribed on the pedestal of a broken image of standing Buddha, records the gift of the figure by some 'Vihārasvāminī Devata'-most probably a 'Mother Superior' of a nunnery' for the acquisition of supreme knowledge by her parents and all sentient beings'. The other is the gift of another nun of the same of Jayabhaṭṭā to a monastery named Yaśo-vihāra.[14] Not only stone but bronze images also have been discovered from Mathurā and other places which add to the glory of the artists of this period.

The city of śrāvastī is prominent in Buddhist literature for being hallowed by the presence and activities of the Buddha Himself. It is identified with the modern ruined city of Saheth-Maheth in the Gonda and Bahraich districts of Uttar Pradesh, where General Cunningham discovered a colossal image of the Buddha with the name of Śrāvastī inscribed on it. Archaeological excavations have brought to light many of the sites mentioned by the Chinese pilgrims and the place agrees reasonably with their description. The Jetavana-Vihāra with its eastern and northern gates, as described by Fa-Hien, has been brought to light by General Cunningham at Saheth. The Aṅgulimāla-Stūpa, the Gandha-Kuṭī, and the Kosāmba-kuṭī are also supposed to have been found out and identified by the excavations. Five brick-built monasteries together with a shrine and a *Stūpa* have been unearthed in this area, of which some belong to our period of survey. There are some structural remains of the Gupta and subsequent periods, as also of the earlier period, which testifies that the site was occupied from the Kushan period upto the llth-12th centuries A.D.

The sculptures so far found at this site are either prior or anterior to our period, and it is strange that no sculpture of this period has hitherto come to light. But there are many inscribed terracotta seals and sealings bearing the Buddhist creed in scripts of the 6th-7th centuries.

The Prayāga country, or the district found Allahabad, was the centre of Buddhism from an early period, from the lift-time of the Buddha. Kauśāmbī, modern Kosam near Allahabad, where the Ghoṣitarāma monastery mentioned in the Buddhist literature has been unearthed together with an inscription of the earlier centuries mentioning the name of the monastery, was sanctified by the presence of the Lord Buddha himself. The records of the Chinese pilgrims prove that this country continued to be a centre of Buddhism also in subsequent periods, at least upto the 7th century, when Huien Tsang visited India and Harshavardhana was ruling in this region. Though no inscription either of Harsha or any other contemporary king speaks of it, both Huien Tsang and Harsha's biographer Bāṇa depicts him as a great patron of Buddhism. The quinquennial religious assembly, organised under the auspices of Harsha, is said to have been held at Allahabad during the visit of the Chinese pilgrim. Huien Tsang speaks eloquently of the assembly and the deep favour shown to Buddhism by its inaugurator, Harsha. Two inscriptions belonging to periods earlier than Harsha have been found in the neighbouring areas relate the continuation of the religion from the earlier dates. Of the two inscriptions, the first, ascribed to the reign of the Gupta ruler Kumāragupta I, is found at Mankuwar in the Allahabad District, and records the installation of the stone figure of Buddha, on which it is inscribed, by a monk named Buddha-mitra.[15] An attempt has been made to identify this Buddhamitra with his name-sake, the teacher of Vasubandhu, which is, of course, not without doubt.[16] The other inscription, found from a village named Deoriya in the same district, though undated, is assigned to the 5th century on paleographic grounds, and records the gift of the image of Buddha on which it is engraved, by a Śākya monk Bodhivarman.[17]

Kasia in the Gorakhpur District is the modern site of ancient

Kuśīnagar, hallowed in the history of Buddhism as the place of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, and is consequently one of the four great places of pilgrimage for the Buddhists. Kasia has yielded a large number of archaeological meterials which show that the origin of the place goes back to a remote antiquity, even as early as the Mauryan age. Of the many *Mahāparinirvāṇa Chaityas* found at this place, the main ones, at least the one designated *Māthā-Kuvār-Kā-Koṭ*, by the local people, is supposed to have been rebuilt at this period. A colossal recumbent stone image of Buddha in the pose of attaining *Mahāparinirvāṇa* has been unearthed at Kasia which bears an inscription under its pedestal recording the gift of the same figure by an abbot (*Mahāvihāra-savāmin*) named Haribala.[18] Again in the relic chamber of a large *Stūpa* behind the Nirvana temple at Kasia, was found a copper vessel—probably containing some relics with an inscribed copper lid. The inscription contains the Buddhist *Nidāna Sūtra* and also records the gift (of the vessel) by the pious Haribala, obviously the same person as the donor of the image mentioned above. The statement in the inscription that the urn belonged to the *Nirvāṇa-Chaitya*, confirms the identity of Kasia with the ancient Kuśīnagara. Further evidence of the identity of Kasia with Kuśīnagara is supplied by a number of clay seals depicting the Buddha in the attitude of attaining *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, with the *Dharmachakra* or the Wheel of Law, underneath, and the legend '*Mahāparinirvāṇa Bhikshusaṅghasya*' in Gupta characters, or '*Śrī Mahāparinirvāṇa Mahāvihāriyārya-bhikshusaṅghasya*' in eighth century characters. Some official sealings with legends in Gupta characters and fragmentary stone inscriptions are also found in the area.[19]

Sāranāth is for ever a place of hallowed memory to the Buddhist world. The place had the singular fortune of being the birth place of Buddhism as well as the Buddhist *Saṅgha*, the two 'Jewels' of the Buddhist Trinity. The first Buddhist organisation formed at Sārnāth continued to exist here in subsequent days also. Aśoka who is credited with building numerous Buddhist edifices, constructed the Dharmarājikā *Stūpa* here, and erected one of his edict pillers, the stump of which still remains in situ, the inscribed portion of it having been preserved in such an excellent condition that it can be read quite

easily even after such a long interval of time. The *Stūpa* was seen by Huien Tsang and it remained extant even about two centuries ago, when a local chief of Benares, Jagat Singh by name, destoryed it for the procurement of stones. The Lion Capital crowning the piller which has been adopted as the insignia of the Republic of India has been exhibited in the adjoining museum. In the Suṅga, Kāṇva and later periods, the Sārnāth monastery continued to exist in an insignificant way, but it was revived again in the Kushāṇa period, specially during the reign of Kaṇishka. Kaṇishka was a patron of Mahāyānism, and the introduction of Buddhist images began about the same time as his rule, figures of the Buddha not having been executed in sculpture beforehand. The most notable statue of the period of Kaṇishka found at Sārnāth is the colossal Bodhisattva figure with the umbrella dedicated by the monk Bala. The Buddhist art attained the summit of its glory at Sārnāth during the Gupta period, and a considrable number of Buddhist images which have been unearthed from Sārnāth during excavations as well as those of the same period found from Mathurā, are regarded as the finest specimens of Indian art. The main shrine of Sārnāth is supposed to have been erected during the Gupta period, but who was its patron is not yet clear. The famous Dhamekh *Stūpa.* still extant at Sārnāth must have been rebuilt on an earlier nucleus, if not built anew, during this period and show a marked distinction in its formation compared with other *Stūpas* of earlier origin. A fair number of inscriptions found from Sārnāth helps us to ascertain the condition of Buddhism in this period. Some are discussed here : An inscription of the later part of the 4th century A.D., on the pedestal of broken image of a standing Buddha, records the gift of the statue by a Buddhist nun 'Dharmmade'. The inscription below a sandstone has-relief representation of three scenes of the life of the Buddha, belonging to the 5th century (now deposited in the Indian Museum, Calcutta) records that the sculpture was made by order of a religious mendicant named Harigupta. An inscription on a figure of the Buddha, assigned to the reign of Kumāragupta (II) records the gift of the image by a certain monk Abhayamitra. Another image contains the inscription '*Deya-dbarmoryam Kumāraguptasya*', which suggests that the donor was perhaps the Gupta king Kumāragupta himself. Two

other inscriptions of the monk bhayamitra have been found at Sārnāth on the pedestals of two similar beautiful Buddha images standing on lotus, assigned to a later period, probably to the reign of Budhagupta. There are also the 5th century inscription of the gift of the monk Śīlasena and the 6th century gift of the great lay-devotee Narannana as well as the gift of a pillar used as a lamp-post in the main shrine by the devout worshipper Kīrti, belonging to the 5th century. A peculiar fact about the inscriptions of this period is that they seldom state the particular section of Buddhism to which the donors or the donee belonged. And as such we are confronted with a difficulty to ascertain the form of religion prevalent in a certain locality. This difficulty is somewhat solved by two dedicatory inscriptions on a railing-stone at Sārnāth, recording the paying of homage to the Sarvāstivādin teachers. Ston Know remarks about these inscriptions : 'the inscription consists of two distinct parts in different characters. The beginning belongs to the third or fourth century A.D. The final portion .... is older by about four centuries. It appears that the first part of the earlier inscription has been erased and a different beginning substituted'. From these, it becomes evident that the Sarvāstivādins were predominant at least in this region, and in the previous centuries some rival sect had the hold in the same region, the name of which the later sects could not bear and scratching their name substituted that of their own instead.[20]

The city of Pāṭaliputra, modern Patna, had no less importance in the history of religion than its political one. It became the capital city as early as the time of the grandson of Bimbisāra. Aśoka too had his capital at this city, and this place must have been a centre of Buddhism from that very period. Fa-Hien in the early 5th century saw a large monastery with the adherents of the Mahāyāna sect, and another belonging to the Hīnayāna faith. Both the monasteries contained numerous priests and were great centres of learning. But Huien Tsang, two centuries later, found the city almost deserted, with very few Buddhist and Brāhmaṇic ruins scattered here and there. Archaeological excavations have brought to light that is supposed to be the palace of Aśoka, and later excavations have unearthed some

Buddhist establishments among which is the Ārogyavihāra of the Gupta period. Further excavations may one day bring to light the ruins of those establishments, which Fa-Hien mentioned.

The illustrious institution of Nālandā did not rise into prominence till the later part of the Gupta rule. According to Tāranātha, Nālandā was a flourishing centre of Buddhism as early as the time of Nāgārjuna (*i.e.*, 2nd century A.D.), who is said to have passed his academic as well as teaching career in the monastery of Nālandā. But we have no archaeological or epigraphic record in support of the statement. All the Buddhist Vihāras, from their earliest history had education, particularly the training in the *Tripiṭka*, as one of their essential subjects. In the same manner, the Nālandā monastery with its educational activities might have existed in an humbler an earlier period, but it did not gain the world-wide reputation as a University centre till the time of the Gupta rulers, and that also in the later part of their reign. Archaeological reports do not either prove its existence before that period. Probably it was not before the time of Kumaragupta that the Nālandā monastery came into prominence, as the coin of the king found on the site indicates, the inscribed copperplate ascribed to Samudragupta is supposed by scholars as spurious; and Fa-Hien does not mention a single word about the monastery of Nālandā, though he speaks of the village Nalo and the Sariputra Tope. On the other hand, Hiuen Tsang, two centuries later, speaks highly of the monastic establishment of Nālandā, of its patron kings, of the succession of teachers, the fame of whose deep knowledge and scholasticism spread all over Asia and attracted students from far off countries. Under one of them, *viz.*, Śīlabhadra, he himself studied for a long period. The architectural remains of Nālandā disclose several strata which indicate that the editices were built and rebuilt several times, and the monastery itself was in a flourishing condition upto the period of the Pālas. The majority of the inscriptions from Nālandā belong to the Pāla age. For the period under review, we have very few inscriptions, one of which is quite interesting. It is of the time of Yaśovarmadeva; and since its character resemble those of the Āpsāḍ inscription of Ādityasena, it is placed in the 6th

century A.D. Its records certain gifts of Malada,[21] son of the minister of Yaśovarmadeva, to the temple of the Buddha, erected by Bālāditya at Nālandā. Though some disputes have been raised about the identity and date of the Yaśovarmadeva during whose reign the gift was made,[22] this inscription is of considerable value as it confirms the statement made by Hiuen Tsang that the Nalanda monastery was built by 'Bālāditya Rājā'. The inscription gives the description of the Nālandā monastery as follows : 'Bālāditya, the great king of irresistible valour ...... erected a great and extraordinary temple of the illustrious son of Śuddhodana (*i.e.*, the Buddha) hear at Nālandā. Nālandā had scholars well-known for their (knowledge of the) sacred texts and art, and (was full of the heaps of the rays of the Chaityas shining and bright like white clouds. It had a row of Vihāras, the line of whose tops touched the clouds Nālandā had temples which were brilliant on account of the network of the rays of the various jewels set in them and was the pleasant abode of the learned and virtuous Saṅgha . . . 'From the record it seems probable that the donor Mālāda himself also took to the life of a monk and his sister Nirmalā mentioned in the inscription might also have been a nun. Besides this and one or two other minor epigraphs, numerous votive inscriptions—some of them bearing different Buddhist *sūtras*-and clay seals bearing the name of the organisation of the Bhikkhus of Nālandā' (*Śrī Nālandā mahāvihāriyabhikkhusaṅghasya*'), belonging to different periods, have been unearthed during excavations. Two of the carved bricks bear on them the complete *Pratityasamutpāda Sūtra* and its expositions in Gupta characters, which is supposed to be unique of its kind.[23]

The township of Rājagṛha, modern Rajgir, was found by both the Chinese pilgrims as almost deserted, and archaeological reports also ascribe practically nothing as belonging to this period, except the *stūpa* of Giriyak near Rajagir, which has a shape quite different from the earlier ones.

Bodh Gaya is a place of perpetual interest not for the Buddhists alone but for every one who is in the least interested in the religion of the Buddha, because it is here that Gautama Buddha attained his supreme knowledge, and, as such, it continues to be visited by

numerous Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists from the earliest times. Aśoka made a pilgrimage to this place, in commemoration of which he constructed a railing around the Bodhi tree and the seat of the Buddha underneath it, and perhpas also erected a pillar as is supposed from some carvings of Bharhut, but nowhere in the surrounding area of Bodh Gaya are found any remains of the pillar nor this assumption finds support from the records of the Chinese pilgrims. Two sets of railings are to be found at Bodh Gaya, the one belonging to the time of Aśoka with the stories of the Buddha's life carved on them, and the other set belonging to the Gupta period, with the typical Gupta ornamentations depicted on them. A peculiar fact is that all the inscriptions, both old and new, are incised on the older set of railings.[24] The Bodh Gaya temple show marks of additions and alterations, and the nucleus of the present temple is supposed to have been originated in the Gupta period. According to a Chinese record, 'Hing-Tchoan' by Wang-hiuen-tse, the Ceylonese king Śrīmeghavarṇa sent two monks to the court of Samudragupta to secure permission to build a monastery at Bodh Gaya for the Ceylonese pilgrims, who on a previous occasion had to suffer for want of accommodation. Permission is said to have been granted, of the inscriptions, of Bodh Gaya pertaining to our period, the earliest one is the one ascribed to the reign of Mahārāja Trikamala, possibly a feudatory of the Gupta monarchs, which record that two monks, both teachers of Vinaya, caused one siṁharatha to dedicate the image of the Bodhisattva—evidently the one on which it is incised, with the help of two other persons, one of them being a female lay devotee and the other an expounder of the Holy text.[25] Then, there are the two inscriptions of the Ceylonese monk Mahānāman, dating in the 6th century A.D., the former recording the erection of a *Maṇdapa* for the Buddha within the area of Bodh Gaya, and the latter recording the gift of a figure of the Buddha, by the same person. This monk Mahānāman is recorded to be an inhabitant of Laṅkādvīpa or the island of Ceylon (mod. Śrī Laṅkā) and is uncertainly identified with the author of the well-known Pali chronicle of Ceylon, *viz.*, the *Mahāvaṁśa*.[26] But whatever his identity might be, these two inscriptions testify to the fact that people from such a distant country like Ceylon retained their connection with this place

(which began with the mission sent by Aśoka) even in this period, though it is evident from other inscriptions that these are not the first pilgrims from Ceylon to Bodh Gaya.[27] That pilgrims from Ceylon continued their visit to this place in subsequent centuries also is proved from a 6th or 7th century inscription in which it is stated that some cion of the ruling family of Laṅkā, Prakhyātakirti by name, caused some buildings to be made here ('at Triratna' as the expression runs).[28] Another fragmentary inscription from the same place and the same period records the pious gift of an unknown devotee for the plastering, regular repairing, maintenance for the burning of lamps in the shrine of the Buddha, and in the monastery, as well as the excavation of a well or pond for the use of the monks.[29] Another inscription of the 6th century on the pedestal of a Buddha image (now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta), records the gift of the image by two Śākya monks named Dharmagupta and Daṅshṭrāsena,[30] natives of an unidentified place called Tishyāmaratīrtha.

Buddhism must have penetrated into Bengal at least in the early years of the Christian era, as referred to in the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa inscription, even if we leave out of consideration the Mahāsthān inscription written in Maurya characters, which mentions the *Chavaggiya bhikkhus*, *i.e.*, the group of six *bhikshus* headed by Devadatta and forming an anti-party of the organisation of the Buddha. Of the Chinese pilgrims, Fa-Hian did not enter into North Bengal, but be went to the adjacent countries like Champā in the Bhagalpur district, and to Tamralipti, where he himself stayed for two years and studied Buddhist scriptures. He found the religion of the Buddha flourishing at Tāmralipti, which had then many *stūpas* and monasteries full of monks. Hiuen Tsang travelled deep inside Bengal and came across many *stūpas* and monasteries inhabited by both Hīnayānist and Mahāyānist monks. The establishments mentioned by Hiuen Tsang and other Chinese pilgrims who visited them subsequently are not yet definitely located, but the numerous ruins scattered all over the length and breadth of Bengal-the majority of which is at present included within the area of Bangladesh-suggest that if systematic explorations and excavations are carried out, most

of the places mentioned by them will ultimately be brought to light and identified. The prosperous condition of Buddhism in Bengal in the Gupta period onwards is also attested by various documents. The Gunaighar copper-plate[31] of the reign of Mahārāja Vainyagupta, evidently a cion of the Gupta family, dated in 506-07 A.D., records the grant of land by the king at the instance of his vassel Mahārāja Rudradatta in favour of the Buddhist *Avaivartaka saṅgha* of the Mahāyāna sect. The *saṅgha* founded by Ācārya Śāntideva was living in a monastery called Āśrama-Vihāra, which was dedicated to Ārya Avalokiteśvara and had been established by the said Rudradatta. The plate also refers to two other Buddhist monasteries in the neighbouring area, one of which is designated Rāja-Vihāra or the royal monastery. The Śāntideva mentioned in the inscription is surely not the author of *Śikahāsamuccaya,* who is supposed to have lived a century later[32] but some other teacher of the same name. And the name of the particular *saṅgha, viz., Avaivartaka* is found for the first time in this plate, and we are unable to trace any other reference to this school elsewhere. As a point of solution it may be mentioned that the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* contains a number of references to a stage named '*Avaivartika Bodhisattvasthānam*' and also expressions like *Avivartika, Avaivartika teja,* and *Avaivartika, etc.*.[33] It seems probable that a sect which aimed at the *Avaivartika* or 'incapable of sliding back' stage, grew up in this locality, which took the name of *Avaivartaka* or *Avaivartika saṅgha.* At any rate, this record is a positive evidence that Buddhism took a firm root in that inner corner of Bengal even in this period, under the royal patronage. The condition of Buddhism in the 7th century Bengal, if not the whole of India, is reflected in an inscription on a copper plate found from Kailan in the Tippera district of Bengal. It is the donation of an official of a certain king named Śrīdharaṇa Rāta, to the Buddhist *Triratna,* as well as some other donations to a number of Brāhmaṇas for performing 'the five great sacrifices.[34] The religious toleration which is the characteristic feature of Indian ideal is once more manifested in this inscription. It supplies further evidence to the fact that Buddhism was tending towards the merger with Brāhmaṇism and devotees of the Buddha did not refrain from being respectful to Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism at the

same time. Another inscription of a somewhat later date, found from Bengal, is also of a similar effect as the Kailan plate. It is the inscription on an image of Sarvāṇi[35] (a form of Dūrgā) dedicated by Prabhāvatī, a queen of a Buddhist king named Devakhaḍga. Two copper-plates with inscriptions found from Asrafpur in Bengal[36] reveal that a number of rulers whose names ended in Khaḍga and who belonged to what may be called the 'Khaḍga family', ruled in Bengal during the earlier part of the 8th century A.D. The inscriptions are of great significance, since they acquaint us with a line of princes who accepted Buddhism as their personal religion after a long spell of time. And further more, though none of these Buddhist kings was as illustrious as any Buddhist ruler like Aśoka, these Khaḍga rulers may be regarded as the predecessors of a long and glorious line of Buddhist kings, *viz.*, the Pālas, who were by no means inferior to the earlier ones, and who created the concluding epoch in the history of Buddhism in subsequent centuries. Numerous Buddhist images have been found from Bengal, but the majority of them belong to the Pāla period. The earliest extant Buddha image found in Bengal is the standing image of the Buddha from Bihārail in Rajsahi District.[37] The image is to be dated, from its style, not later than the 5th century A.D. and was deposited in the Varendra Research Society Museum, Rajsahi (Bangladesh). It bears such close affinity to these from Sārnāth that one may quite well doubt if it has been supplied from the same source. Unfortunately, the image is very badly damaged, but inspite of that, this is a fine piece of sculpture. Another interesting Buddhist figure of the same period is the gold-plated image of Mañjuśri, collected from the Baladdhap mound near Mahāsthān, Bogra (also in Bangladesh). This is undoubtedly one of the finest specimens of bronze or octo-alloy images so far found in Northern and Eastern India. The figure has the Dhyānī Buddha Akshobhya, the spiritual father of Mañjuśri, according to the code of *Sādhanamālā* placed on its head. This image is also damaged, but the loveliness of the figure shows that it was also very beautiful in its original state. The execution of the limbs and drapery leads us to assign it to the Gupta period. An important thing to be noted in connection with this image is that it has changed the former notion that gold plated images

were made for the first time by the Siamese artists in Siam only in the 8th century A.D. In fact, this image proves that metal images were used to be gilt long before that period in India and perhaps the Siamese artists were indebted to India in this respect also.[38]

Orissa was one of the cradles of Buddhism when it tasted the religious fervour at the time of Aśoka, if not earlier still. The religion again took its last shelter in this country before its final diappearance from Bengal and other parts of India after the Muhammadan invasion,[39] and left its last vestiges here. We do not hear of any activities of the Buddhists in this part of the country during the intervening period. That Buddhism existed at Orissa in the 6th-7th centuries A.D. is proved by the statement of Hiuen-Tsang who is said to have seen many Buddhist monasteries and numerous devotees in the Wu-Tu (Odra or Orissa) country.[40] He was selected by Harshavardhana to be deputed with four other scholars from Nālandā to subjugate the Hīnayānist monks of Orissa who were becoming vehement against the Mahāyānists.[41] The group of Buddhist monasteries in the Jajpur hills, known as Udaygiri, Lalitagiri and Ratnagiri, have produced a large number of sculptures and images most of which belong to a later period though a few are datable to this period. An image of the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi belonging to the later Gupta period has been found out from a place named Śāntamādhava in Jajpur, and a life-size image of four-armed Avalokiteśvara on Ratnagiri have the same pose common in the sculptures of the Gupta age. Many votive *stūpas* and architectural and sculptural fragments comprising heads of some colossal Buddha images have been found from this hill, *viz.*, Ratnagiri. Excavations in this area about two decades back have brought to light vast areas of *Stūpas*, monasteries, temples and a large number of images belonging to the Vajra-yāna school.[42] Sculptures belonging to later periods found in this place prove the continuance of this place as a Buddhist centre. At Lalitagiri we also find a large number of sculptures fixed in modern temples, which have inscriptions on them in the 8th century characters, mostly regarding the Buddhist creeds. The sculptures represent in many cases the Buddhist gods and goddesses like Avalokiteśvara, Tārā, Maitreya, *etc.* A number of Buddha, Avalokiteśvara. Prajñā-pāramitā and such other Buddhist

figures has been found from the Udayagiri hill also and these sculptures, too, mostly contain inscriptions in scripts from the 7th to 10th-11th centuries. On the back of one such image of Avalokiteśvara, with the Dhyāni-Buddha Amita seated in its crest, is an inscription recording the gift of the figures by a monk Śubhagupta, written in the 7th or 8th century characters.[43] The extensive ruins in these three hills prove that this locality was a flourishing centre of Buddhism from the 5th-6th centuries onwards, and the cult of Āvalokiteśvara and Tārā was more prevalent. The Neulpur grant of the king Śubhakaradeva[44] reveals that a line of Buddhist kings was ruling at Orissa in the 8th century, and Buddhism must have been flourishing under patronage of the Bhaumakaras. Instead of the conventional epithet used by all Buddhist kings and devotees, *viz.*, '*Parama Saugata*', the Bhauma Kara kings of Orissa had used in their inscriptions a new designation for themselves, *viz.*, '*Parama Tāthāgata*' which of course, carries the same meaning. The object of the grant is to register the gift of some villages to a number of Brāhmaṇas by the king Here, again, we are acquainted with another example of the liberal character of Indian religions, as also with the fact that Buddhism and Brahmanism were coming in closer relations with each other.

The religion of Buddha was introduced into Western India even during the lifetime of its founder who is said to have deputed his disciple Mahākachchāyana—a native of Avanti, to preach his religion there. Again, during the time of Aśoka, Aparānta or the western country received the Yavana Dhammarakshita as the missionary despatched by the emperor. This country was fortunate enough in having the Sātavāhana rulers as great patrons of Buddhism, under whom the religion flourished greatly and numerous cave-temples were excavated in the hilly tracts of Western India. The origin of these cave-temples belongs to further antiquity, perhaps to the time of Aśoka, who incised one of his rock-edicts on the hill of Girnar, though the credit of constructing the majority of them goes to the Sātavāhanas. The caves of Nasik, Karle, Bhaja, Junnar, Kanberi, *etc.*, bear the testimony of the glorious days of Buddhism. Though they lost their importance in subsequent periods, some of them at least were not altogether deserted and were occupied or frequented by the

Buddhists who made gifts to them even upto the 10th-11th centuries A.D. In the great Chaitya-cave at Kanheri, there is an inscription recording the gift of a Buddhist monk of the seated figure of the Buddha under which it is carved. On the veranda of the same cave, there is an inscription under a standing image of the Buddha, which records that the image was dedicated by a mendicant, Buddhaghosha, the desciple of a teacher named Dharmavatsa, who was well-versed in the three *Piṭakas.* In the veranda of Cave No. 5 is the 'meritorious gift' of a Buddha figure by a monk Dharmagupta. Near the great pillar at the same place, on a small *Chaitya* in bas-relief, is incised the beginning of the well-known Buddhist creed and in a small chamber there stands a figure of Buddha as the gift of a teacher Buddharakshita. All these inscriptions belong to the 5th to the 7th centuries A.D.[45] A copper plate found from Kanheri bearing IIa 6th century date records the erection of a *Chaitya* in dressed stone bricks. The original architecture of Kanheri is simple but there are subsequent additions of sculpture with the development of Mahāyāna.

A copper plate from Hireguti (N. Canara District, Karnataka) of the king Asaṅkita of the ruling family of the Bhojas, belonging to the late 5th or early 6th century A.D., records the gift of a village Sundarīka, for the enjoyment of the local Buddhist community or Āryasaṅgha, at the request of the king's chieftain Kottipeggili. The inscription is very interesting for the fact that the previous Bhoja rulers made grants exclusively to the Brahmanas, only Asaṅkita and his line seem to have been Buddhists, which is proved not only from this inscription but also from the adoption of elephant as their insignia.[46]

The Buddhist caves of Lonad (a few miles off Kalyan in the Bombay Presidency) seems to be an intermediate station on the long pilgrim and trade route which led from Sopara via Kanheri and other Buddhist monasteries on Salsette islands to the Nanaghat pass and on to the higher Deccan. Due to absence of inscriptions the date of the caves cannot be ascertained definitely, but the beautiful and lively sculptures that are chiselled out in the caues bear such affinity with those in the later caves of Ajanta that they may well be ascribed to the period when the latter were excavated. The sculptures in these

caves depict *Jātaka* stories, some of which cannot be identified. There are also scenes of the Buddha's subjugation of the furious elephant Nalagiri, court scenes *etc.*[47] That Junagarh was a fairly large centre of Buddhism at least upto the 7th century A.D. is testified by statement of Hiuen Tsang who found about fifty convents with nearly 3000 monks, belonging to the 'Sthavira sect of the Mahāyāna', as also by the discovery of numerous Buddhist caves near modern monastery named Bawa Pyara's Maṭh.[48]

The Maitraka rulers of Valabhi began their career as the vassal (Sāmanta) of the Imperial Guptas. They shook off the Gupta suzerainty with the decline of the Gupta power and gradually changed their epithet from '*Sāmanta*' to the full fledged imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja*.[49] These Maitraka kings, though themselves not professed Buddhists, were great patrons of the Buddhist religion, and a large number of inscriptions of the rulers of the dynasty record the bounteous gifts to the Buddhist organisations of the country. Two female members of this royal family were devout Buddhist nuns, who established monasteries of their own. One of them, *viz.*, Duḍḍā, was the niece of king Dhruvasena. She is also mentioned as the queen in some other inscriptions. The other lady of the royal family who embraced the life of a nun is named Mimmā. From the inscriptions of the Maitraka rulers it becomes clear that during their rule, the region around modern Saurastra was a flourishing centre of Buddhism with not less than thirteen monasteries in the area. Inscriptions mention the names of at least 13 monasteries *viz.*, The Bhaṭārka Vihāra, the Gohaka Vihāra, the Abhyantarika Vihāra, the Kakka Vihāra, the Buddhadāsa Vihāra, the Vimalagupta Vihāra, the Sthiramati Vihāra, the Yaksha-sūtra Vihāra, the Pūrṇa-Bhaṭṭa Vihāra, the Ajjita Vihāra, the Bāppāpadiya Vihāra, the Vaṁśataka Vihāra the Yodhāvaka Vihāra.[50] Hiuen Tsang connects the two eminent Buddhist scholars Guṇamati and Sthiramati with Valabhī, and, in fact, we also find mention of the *Vihāra* named after Sthiramati in the inscriptions of the Valabhī kings. The references of donations in the inscriptions for buying books for the monasteries[51] also support the tradition that the Valabhī monasteries were great centres of education like that of Nālandā.[52]

The missionary activities of Aśoka is best illustrated in the monuments of Sāñchi, the earliest strata of the main *stūpa* of which is ascribed to Aśoka. The remains of an edict pillar of the same emperor found in the vicinity lends support to the assumption. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that in the Ceylonese chronicle, *Mahāvaṁśa*, it is stated that Mahendra, son of Aśoka, who headed the Buddhist mission for Sri-lanka visited his mother 'Devi' before his sojourn, at a monastery at Chetiyagiri near Vidiśā, where she was living as a nun, and stayed in that monastery for a short period. This Chetiyagiri is probably identical with the hillock of Sāñchi. It is strange to note that none of the Chinese pilgrims seems to have visited Sāñchi during their tour in India, for none of them make any mention of this centre of Buddhism, which, as is evident from the extensive ruins found at the site, was in a flourishing condition when Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang visited India. The only possible reason of their silence about the place seems to be that none of them cared to visit this place because it was not hallowed by the presence of the Buddha at any time, nor was it associated with any episode of Buddha's miraculous activities. Anyhow, the place suited very well with the instruction of the Buddha as to the position suitable for establishing a monastery, *viz*., one not too near too far from big city; and naturally enough, an important Buddhist centre grew up in this place. The main *stūpa* must have been dedicated in honour of the Buddha and the rest were in honour of more distinguished disciples of the Master, as is proved from the discovery of the relics of Sāriputra and Mahā-Moggalāna from the top of the Stūpa No. 3 The original *stūpa* erected by Aśoka, having been damaged in course of time, was encased into a newer one instead of being repaired, so that it became enlarged to a greater extent than its former size. This system of constructing new *stūpas* over the older ones was not uncommon in those days. In subsequent centuries, when erection erection of votive *stūpas* became the custom of the day, numerous *stūpas* of different dimensions pillars, and gateways continued to be erected on the site. Some of the very few pillars which exist in India, with the exception of those erected by Aśoka, are found at Sāñchi. One of them contain a fragmentary inscription in the 5th century characters, recording the gift of the

pillar by a Vihārasvāmin whose name ended in 'Rudra, and who is said to be the son of some 'Gosura-Simhabala'. The pillar was surmounted by the figure of Vajrapāṇi, which now remains in the museum at Sāñchi. An inscription of Āmrākardava, an officer of Chandragupta II of the Imperial Gupta line, records the gift of the former of an allotment of land called Īśvaravāsaka, as also of some amount of money, to the Buddhist community of Kākanādabhoṭa (the name which was often mentioned in ancient inscriptions to designate Sāñchi) for the purpose of feeding the monks and maintaining lamps. Another inscription dated in the year 131 of the Gupta era, records the grant of a female lay-devotee Harisvaminī, the wife of the lay-devotee Sanasiddha, of certain amount of money to the same community and for the same purpose.[53] Some more inscriptions incised mostly on the pedestals of Buddhist figures and dating from the 4th to the 7th or 8th centuries have been found at the site. Of course, inscriptions belonging to earlier or later periods are also not lacking, but we are not concerned with them for the present. A fragmentary inscription in the 7th century characters have been found from the Monastery No. 43 at Sāñchi, which is devoted to the praise of Lokanātha, who is described as having lotus in his hand and bear Amitābha (on his head), and also Vajrapāni. It also mentions the lord of Mahāmālava (Malwa) and a certain ruler Vappaka Deva; a monastery with cells (*Layana*) is also stated to have been built. There seems to have the further reference that the (above-mentioned) monastery belonged to a person named Tuṅga and that the benefaction recorded took place at Boṭa-Śrīparvata (*i.e.*, Sāñchi).[54] There are numerous sculptural and architectural remains on the site which bear witness to the fact that the place was a flourishing centre of Buddhism during our period of review.[55]

Mandasor (ancient Daśapura) in the Gwalior district was known to have been a centre of Brahamanism only. But a stone slab discovered at the place indicates that there was also some place for Buddhism as well. The inscription on the slab records the construction of a well endowed with a *stūpa*, a garden and a *prapa* (water stall) by Dattabhaṭa, the Commander-in-Chief of the king Prabhākara. The

record is dated in the Malava samvat 524 (467-68 A.D.). The inscription mentions the early Gupta king Chandragupta II and his younger son Govindagupta, the donor Dattabhaṭa being a son of Govindagupta's general Vāyurakshita.[56]

Though Mandasor did not produce much Buddhist remains, the prevalence of Buddhism in the Gwalior District is amply proved by the group of Buddhist caves at Bagh in the same district. These caves—though only four in number–form a very interesting group. They belong to the classical period of Indian history, and have some sculptured figures and the most charming paintings which can very well stand in comparison with those at Ajantā. One more interesting fact about these caves is that though the caves belonged to the Mahāyānists, and there are some Buddha and Boddhisattva figures carved in the caves, the main object of worship in them is the plain and simple rock-cut *stūpa* and no figure of the Buddha is carved on them, as is most natural for the Hīnayānists. The very soft nature of the hill, on which the caves of Bagh are executed, is a great hindrance to their way to durability and a few of them have already collapsed, leaving only the four surviving ones.[57]

The most illustrious examples of rock-cut caves of this period are those at Ajantā and Ellorā in the Deccan. The caves of Ajanta had their beginning more than a century earlier than the Christian era, most probably under the patronage of the Sātavahana rulers, whose dominions included this region and who were well-known patrons of Buddhism. But in the earlier stage, the monastery of Ajantā did not prosper much. And though it continued for a period of more than three centuries, only five out of the present twenty-nine[58] caves are supposed to have been in use at the early period. After that, the monastery of Ajantā must have been deserted for a long period of four centuries, when about the fifth century A.D., the Mahāyānists took charge of the hill resorts, and turned them to an important centre of Buddhism. Of the 24 caves belonging to the Mahāyāna sect, there are two *Chaitya* halls enshrining *stūpas* with images of the Buddha carved on them as a contrast to the corresponding two Chaitya-halls of the five earlier Hīnayāna ones which enshrine *stūpas* but without

any kind of carving on them. The rest of the twenty-two caves belonging to the Mahāyāna sect, are dormitories for the residence of the monks with stone beds in them and with the innermost central chamber of these cave-dwellings used as shrines sheltering colossal figures of the Buddha in them. These caves are decorated with fine sculptures representing Buddhist figures and in one of them is carved a colossal figure of the recumbent Buddha with various Mahāyānic symbols under it. But the far-reaching fame of Ajantā caves is not so much for its architecture and sculpture, as it is for its fresco-paintings on the walls of the caves. The paintings are the living embodiment of grace and loveliness which have attracted great admiration from the most scrupulous critics of the world. "The artists" remarks Lady Harringham, one of the earliest modern admirers of Ajantā art, "had a complete command of posture. Their seated and floating poses especially are of the great interest. Their knowledge of the types and positions, gestures and beauties of hands are amazing . . . the drawing of foliage and flowers is very beautiful . . . . . some of the schemes of colour and composition are most remarkable and interesting, and there is great variety". This note of appreciation suffices for any further remarks about the art of Ajantā. These paintings illustrate in addition to decorative designs, various events from the life of the Buddha, and the Bodhisattva figures, scenes from the *Jātakas* or the past lives of the Buddha, as also scenes from secular and court lives. The paintings are so mutilated in some places that identification of them became very difficult and sometimes impossible. That the religion of the Buddha had considerably progressed from its primitive phase and become immensely liberal is also well attested by the fact that among the profuse paintings of Ajantā there are innumerable scenes of dancing and music as well as of toiletting and garlanding in what appears to have been the dormitories of Buddhist monks; for what to speak of the scenes of dancing and music, these of toiletting and garlanding were beyond the imagination of the Buddhists of earlier days, since such frivolities were strictly forbidden for the recluses. The art of Ajantā influenced later artists not only of India proper, but also its neighbours like Sri Lanka, China, Japan and Eastern Islands. The paintings of Sigiriya at Ceylon, executed about the same period, bear

a close affinity to those at Ajantā, and the Thousand-Buddha cave' of China, of some later date which have gained world-wide reputation, also have some affinity with those of Ajantā.

The patrons, under whom the monastery of Ajanta flourished in its later phase, were certainly the Vākāṭaka rulers of the Deccan, in whose dominions this region was included. A fragmentary inscription from the Cave No. 16 at Ajantā lends further support to the assumption. It records that the cave was excavated by order of Vīradeva, a devout Buddhist and minister of the Vākāṭaka king Harishena. In Cave No. 17, an inscription records that Achitya, a minister of Rabisāmba, a feudatory to the Vākāṭaka king Harishena, caused to excavate the 'monolithic, gem-like hall' with a *chaitya*, a reservoir, with cool refreshing water, and a Gandhakuṭhi,[59] According to another important inscription from Cave No. 26, it was the monk Buddhabhadra who was responsible for the excavation of the concerned cave by providing funds for the work. His own disciple Bhadrabandhu and another monk Dharmadatta were the supervisors of the work. The information about Buddhabhadra, as are given in this inscription, suggests that he was not an ordinary roaming recluse, but must have been an abbot of a great institution (may be even of the Ajantā monastery itself) and possessed a considerable amount of wealth. The nature of work he performed lends a support to the conjecture. Possession of large amount of wealth by an abbot was no more an unnatural thing in this period, though in primitive Buddhism, a monk was barred from having as his own anything more than the four requisites prescribed by the Buddha. That the monk Buddhabhadra also held an esteemed position is indicated by the mention of his friendship with the minister of the kind of Asmaka, in whose name the cave was dedicated. Another name of importance which is mentioned in this inscription, is that of Sthavira Achala, who is stated as one of the former builders of the *Vihāras*. This Sthavira Achala seems to be no other than the 'Arahat O-che-lo' mentioned by Hiuen Tsang, who is credited to have built a convent in honour of his mother. Besides these important ones, there are other inscriptions, both painted and incised, recording gifts of minister, noblemen, lay-devotees and monks. There are

also explanatory titles of the *Jātakas* painted on the walls of the caves.[60]

A less known Vihāra-cave, 11 miles away from Ajantā, known as the Ghaṭotkacha Cave, contains the fragments of a long inscription. It begins with the invocation to the Buddha, *Dharma*, and *Saṅgha* and mentions about Hastibhoja, the minister of the Vākāṭaka king Devasena and the father of Harishena mentioned in the inscription in Cave No. 16 at Ajantā. Hastibhoja mentioned in this inscription was the father of Vīradeva, during whose ministry the Ajantā *vihāra* was excavated. From the fragmentary character of the inscription, it cannot be stated definitely whether Hastibhoja or his son Vīradeva was at all responsible for the excavation of the Ghaṭotkacha Cave; but as is more likely the father might have got the cave excavated.[61]

Situated about sixty miles away from Ajantā, the twelve Buddhist caves of Ellorā are contemporary with the later phase of those at Ajantā. These caves are richer in sculpture but lack the paintings as well as inscriptions like Ajantā, the only inscription at Ellorā being the Buddhist formula in the Chaitya-cave called the Viśvakarmā Cave. There are about 35 caves scattered over a vast table land, belonging to the three main Indian sects, *viz.*, the Buddhist, the Brahmins and the Jains, the Buddhist group of caves occupying the best and southernmost part of the hill. Of the 12 Buddhist caves, all are Vihāras, except Viśvakarmā, which is a Chaitya-hall enshrining a *stūpa* carved with a colossal seated figure of the Buddha. Buddha images are to be seen at Ellorā also like those of Ajantā, but the difference lies in the fact that while at Ajantā the Buddhas are represented without or with only one or two attendants, at Ellorā, he is most frequently attended by a large number of sidefigures, mostly the Bodhisattvas and their newly introduced *Śaktis* or female counter-parts. Caves Nos. 11 and 12 are designated *Do-Thal* and *Tin-Thal* respectively, though both of them are three-storied and contain a large number of sculptures which include the Seven Human Buddhas, the five Dhyānī Buddhas and their respective Bodhisattvas, in addition to Gandharvas and other decorative motifs. Some of the Brahmanic goddesses like Sarasvatī and Kālī

were being gradually incorporated into the Mahāyāna pantheon in this period, but the figure of the goddess carved on one of the walls of these caves, with books in her hand and a peacock by her side, which had so far been identified as the goddess Sarasvatī, has since been correctly identified by late Dr. J.N. Banerjea, with the personified form of the *Dhāraṇi* or 'protecting spells' named Mahā-Māyuri[62] one of the Pañcharakshā goddesses used to be recited by the Buddhists in order to cure diseases, particularly snake-poison, as the peacock is regarded as the greatest enemy of the snakes.[63] The sculptures of the caves of Ellorā conform to the mythology of the Yogācāra school of Buddhism, and it is supposed that these caves were the resorts of the same sect also. The caves of Ellorā were probably the last deeds of the Buddhists in this region as we do not find any other work of importance by the Buddhists in subsequent period.[64]

A few miles distant from Ellorā, are the rock-hewn Vihāras of Aurangabad, divided into three groups of excavation. The first and the second group are certainly Buddhist, while, the incompleteness of the caves and as such the absence of sculptures in the third group renders it difficult to regard them definitely as Buddhist, though there is nothing as negative evidence against their being Buddhist. Among the whole set of caves there is one Chaitya-hall and the rest are *Vihāras*. From their features it seems that the caves were in active condition from the third to the seventh centuries A.D. The sculptures in these caves are lovely and are imitations of these in Ajantā, particularly the 'vase and foliage' pattern. The Vihāras Nos. 3 and 7 of this group are the finest and are best preserved. The carvings of the images of the Buddha and other gods and goddesses are on a massive proportion and those and the group of musicians and the set of devotees carved on the walls of the caves are of a peculiar as well as beautiful type.[65]

Recent excavations as well as previously found inscriptions prove that the ancient site of South Kośala,comprising modern Bilaspur and Raipur Districts, was a centre of Buddhism at least from the 5th century A.D. Sirpur, in the Raipur district, was noticed and hinted as a site of archaeological interest by Cousens as early as 1903 in his

report. The site has later on been excavated and has brought to light the remains of two large Buddhist monasteries and several other small structures including *vihāras*. A colossal image of the seated Buddha and a life-size figure of Padmapāṇi have been found from one shrine, which, according to an inscription found at the same place, is stated to have been built by a monk named Ānandaprabhu during the regin of Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna in about the first quarter of the 8th century A.D.[66] A considerable amount of antiquities of various kinds have been found at the site which include a fine bronze statue of the Buddha plated with gold having the eyes set in silver. Bronze statues of Padmapāṇi, Mañjuśrī, Tārā and Vajrapāṇi, *etc.*, also have been discovered. A number of seals with Buddhist texts, an exquisitely carved crystal *Stūpa* and a gilt Vajra have also been found in an adjacent site. Of the monasteries discovered at the site, one seems to be a nunnery, from the evidence of a large number of shell and glass belongles found from the site.[67]

An inscription from Ratanpur in the Bilaspur district (now in the Nagpur museum) confirms the view that in the 7th-8th centuries A.D. this place was a populous centre of Buddhism. The inscription in question is of one Bhavadeva Raṅakeśarin. It opens with an invocation to the Buddha, and relates that a certain illustrious king Sūryaghosha built a splendid temple or *Vihāra* for the Buddha, in order to mitigate the sorrow incurred by the accidental death of his son. The inscription further records the restoration of the said temple some time after the regin of king Sūryaghosa, under the supervision of Bhavadeva, who was incharge of the temple, The restoration work was done by two persons under Bhavadeva, one of whom is described as the favourite of the (then ruling) king, a Brahmin well-versed in Buddhist scripture, and the other, a novice in the Buddhist institution.[68] Another inscription, the Mallar plate of Mahāśivagupta of South Kośala, ascribed to the 7th century A.D., record the grant of the said king, of a village to the Buddhist congregation of the monastery at Tārādaṁśaka. The king himself is stated to be a devout Śaiva.[69] A stone inscription from Bihar Kotra in Raigarh district, belonging to the time of king Naravarman and dated in the year 474 of the Malava-

Vikrama era (A.D. 917), records the dedication of a tank for the monks of four quarters and for the quenching of thirst of all sentient beings.[70]

Extensive ruins prove that Andhra and countries on further south were flourishing centres of Buddhism from the centuries even prior to the Christian era. Though in our period, Buddhism had lost its glory, it nevertheless lingered on in these countries. The Buddhist site of Salihundam is on the summit and slopes of a very fine hill in the Ganjam district. There are remains of a large and some smaller *stūpas*, fragments of Buddhist figures, broken image of the Buddha, a figure of Mārichī and such other antiquities, found from the hilltop and the neighbouring village of the same name. The Boston Museum has in its collection standing image of the Buddha found from Buddhapād in Bezwada District. The place is not far from Amarāvatī, the most illustrious centre of Buddhism in Southern India from the 2nd-3rd centuries. The image in question belonged to the 6th century A.D., and it is said that basketful of images and fragments were found at Buddhapād while excavating canal.[71] That the region around the *stūpa* of Amarāvatī was a flourishing centre of Buddhism in subsequent period also is well proved by inscriptions as well as sculptures found in those regions, The *stūpa* at Goli is ascribed to the 4th century A.D. The great *stūpa* of Amarāvatī was frequented and kept in repairs even as late as the 12th century A.D. The sculptures of Amarāvatī and its neighbourhood has formed a different school of its own. The British Museum has very good collections of the sculptures of Amarāvatī and of the places influenced by its art. One of them is a basrelief carved with an image of Mañjuśri which has a lotus in one of his hands, which supports a book, and a second lotus issuing out of the stem of the first, supports a *stūpa*. The figure is interesting because earlier images of Mañjuśrī found from North India, have the Dhyānī Buddha Akshobhya in their head-dresses. The date of the image is supposed to be sometime between 650-750 A.D.[72] The Pallava king Siṁhavarman II, who belonged to the last quarter of the 6th century A.D., presented an image of the Buddha to the *stūpa* of Amrāvatī. The inscription recording the presentation is incomplete

and it records that on his return from an expedition to the North, Siṁhavarman came to a place sacred to the Buddha, which was called Dhānyaghaṭa or Dhānyaghaṭaka (evidently identified with Dhānyakaṭaka, the wellknown name of Amarāvati). The last part of the inscription evidently recorded the gift.[73] The Kapoteśvara temple of Chezarla shows from the remains of its constructions that it was originally a Buddhist *chaitya*, lately converted to a Śaiva temple, with the growing popularity of the religion in South India. The remains of Chezarla may be considered as one of the only two extant brickbuilt Chaitya halls which have preserved their original structural condition, the other being at Ter, the ancient Tagara, in Sholapur District in the erstwhile Nizam's dominions. Both are now converted into Brahmanical temples and are ascribed to the 5th century A.D.[74] A number of stone inscription of the Ānandagotra kings, a dynasty which ruled about the 6th century A.D., anouncing their Buddhist faith are seen in the *Chaity* of Chezarla.[75] Mention may be made of the Mattapad grant of Damodaravarman, written partly in Sanskrit and partly in Prakrit, in which he is mentioned as a devout Buddhist. In Jagayyapeta, an inscription on a marble-slab in the 5th-6th century characters, under a figure of the Buddha, mentions Chandraprabha, the disciple's disciple of Nāgārjuna, the preceptor of Chandraprabha being named as Āchāryya Jayaprabha. A similar slab has also been found from Ramireddipalli.[76]

Another example of rock-cut monasteries of this period lies in the Buddhist remains on the Sankaram hills in the Vizagapatam District. These caves are scattered on the hill and the remains consist of a number of *Stūpas*, a series of rock-cut chambers and the foundations of an extensive monastic building. Some of the *stūpas* are the largest of their kind. From a survey, it seems that the site was in a flourshing condition upto the Gupta period, though its origin goes back to a few centuries earlier.[77] Other places in this region which have yielded remnants of Buddhism are, Nāgārjunakonda, Guṇṭapalle, Ghaṇṭāsālā, Rāmatīrtham, *etc.* Copper images of the Buddha found from Budhani show the typical characteristics of Gupta art in their costume and features. A figure from Amarāvatī and identified as

Avalokiteśvara, has its counter-part in the collection of the British Museum and is ascribed to the middle of the 8th century A.D. Another figure of Vajrapāṇi in the British Museum, though mutilated, has the fine executions like those at Ellorā.[78]

Casting images in metal seems to be a common practice of this period, not only in the southern part of India, but in northern part also. So bronze images of the Buddha have been found not only from this area, but also from Sultanganj. The Sultanganj bronze image is now deposited in the Birmingham museum and is one of the finest specimens of its kind. Incidentally, we may refer also to the 80 feet high metal image of the Buddha said to have been seen by Hiuen Tsang at Nālandā, though no further trace of the image is so far known.[79]

The countries to further south have not yielded many Buddhist antiquities, though the Chinese travellers found the religion in a fairly popular condition. In the western coast, a copper-plate inscription found from Goa (ancient W. Konkan) relates that the notice was issued by a certain Mahārāja Chandravarman and records the grant of a piece of land to a Buddhist monastery (*Mahāvihāra*) at Śivapura, located in Goa. This king was probably a scion of the Bhoja family ruling in that region during the 5th century, to which period the inscription is also ascribed on paleographic grounds.[80]

From the above survey, it may be concluded that though the form of Buddhism had undergone great changes, the religion was in a fairly flourishing condition during this period in all its spheres, though the germ of degeneration had already crept into it. But the degeneration of Buddhism is not disappearance in the proper sense of the term; it is rather a tendency to merge into Brahmanism. The religion of the Buddha started as a protest against Brahmanic ritualism, but ended in itself being more ritualistic than ethical. The line of demarcation between the Buddhists and the Brahminists was becoming narrower in the later part of our period of survey, as is evident from some of the inscriptions stated above. The assimilation of Buddhism into Brahmanism was effected by including the Buddha in the list of ten Avatāras or incarnations of Vishṇu, or sometimes identifying him with

Śiva. This process of assimilation manifested itself in an inscription in the Varāha Perumal temple, dating about the 7th century A.D., where the Buddha is stated as one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. We leave out of consideration the numerous *Purāṇas* of later date which refer to the Buddha as an incarnation of Nārāyaṇa or Vishṇu.[81]

In our period, the religion had considerably progressed from its primitive condition, both in time as well as in form. But the destination was still farther, which was reached during the rule of the Palas in Bengal, when the religion was turned into a mainly ritualistic Tantric one. The *Tantras* had not yet assumed its full-fledged form, but the faint traces of its advent are hinted in some of the literature of this period. The practice of mystic rites, if practised at all, was done in secrecy. Hiuen Tsang mentions that at Kamarūpa, there were 'secret devotees'. This statement may lead one to believe that this was a centre of Tantric Buddhists, but it can not be stated definitely that the Buddhist Tantras found a resort here in that period. Kamarupa, or modern Assam, was for a long time, even a few decades ago, considered to be a place of secret practices, particularly of the later degenerated Tantric type.

The form of Buddhism prevalent at different parts of India at the period under survey cannot be ascertained from the inscriptions, because very few of the numerous inscriptions of this period referring to the Buddhists, state the particular sect to which they belonged. But the growing popularity of Mahāyāna, which was gradually developing into Vajrayāna, is manifested by some inscriptions, reports of the Chinese pilgrims, and above all, by the vast number of images found all over the country. These figures include not only those of Gautama Buddha and the past human Buddhas, but a large number of Bodhisattvas, together with their respective Dhyāni Buddhas or spiritual fathers; then with the development of Vajrayāna, their *Śaktis* or the female counter-parts also were added. We can have a glimpse of the growth of the Buddhist pantheon, which became quite crowded in the next period. In addition to these, there are the personified forms

of the sacred literature of the Mahāyānists, like the *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Mañjuśrī* and *Mahā-Māyurī, etc.*, mentioned above.

Most of the institutions which had their beginning in previous centuries, continued to function in this period and many of those others which flourished in subsequent days, had their beginning in this period. This period may be called the mid-day of Mahāyāna Buddhism, when the Mahāyāna was on the summit of its glory. The gap between Buddhism and Brahmanism was becoming narrower and with the interchange of the conception of god-heads and under the influence of Tantrism, the two almost merged with each other.

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3

Intercourse Between India And China

Buddhism penetrated into China in the early years of the Christian era and was made popular in that country by the favourable disposition of some of the royal families as well as by the successful preaching of Indian missionaries. In the period under review, though none of the Gupta monarchs were a propagator of Buddhism like its great Maurya advocate Aśoka and sent any missionary to preach Buddhism even as a part of their foreign policy, yet the friendly disposition of Indian as well as Chinese kings encouraged Indian missionaries to visit China to a large extent as well attract Chinese pilgrims to a greater number into India. These Buddhist missionary scholars undertook the perilous journey through the different Central Asian and peninsular routes, and it is to them that the Indo-Chinese culture is deeply indebted. The aim of the Chinese pilgrims to India was to gain first-hand knowledge of Buddhist ecclesiastical rules and customs and to collect religious scriptures and images. And that of the Indian missionaries to China was to propagate Buddhist teachings and to translate Buddhist texts into Chinese, some of which were done at the invitation and request of Chinese kings. It is for their enterprise that we find some important Buddhist texts which, but for their existence in Chinese translations, could not be known to have ever existed in Indian original.

Indian influence affected China mainly through its religious ideas and the visible forms of art. Buddhist motifs and sculptures derived their primary inspirations from Indian sources. The earliest datable example of Indo-Chinese sculptures are some bronze statues of the fifth century A.D., but some of the existing sculptures in the Yun-kang caves are of approximate antiquity the beautiful statues of

the Gupta period appear to be the prototypes of the statues of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the Tien-Lung-Shan caves in Shansi provinces. The formal treatment as well as the types so closely resemble certain Gupta sculptures that one may be justified in supposing that a direct influences from India had reached the artists.[1]

Let us now discuss about the account of the Indian and Chinese Buddhist missionaries.

A. Indian Missionaries in China.

A great many Indian Buddhist scholars went to China and contributed their best to the development of Indo-Chinese culture during our period. Most of them were from Kashmir, which was at that time a great centre of Buddhist learning, though there were others also who went from other parts of India. The name of Kumārajīva, however, stands as foremost of all such missionary scholars, but there were a few others who preceded him. Among them, mantion may be made of Saṅghabhūti and Saṅghadeva, both of whom went from Kashmir during the Eastern Tsin dynasty.

Saṅghabhūti was a native of Kashmir, who went to Chang-an in North China in about 381 A.D. He was an expert in the doctrines of the Sarvāstivādin school and could reproduce from memory the *Abhidharma-Vibhāsha-śāstra*. A great Chinese Buddhist monk named Tao-an also lived at Chang-an for some time during his stay there and was greatly influenced by the teachings of the Indian monk. Saṅghabhūti translated a number of Buddhist texts into Chinese at the request of the secretary of the Tartar Chief who were the ruling power of that area at the time. The texts translated by Saṅghabhūti are :—

Abhidharma-vibhāsha-śāstra, *Ārya-Vasumitra-bodhisattva-saṅgīti-śāstra* and *Saṅgharakshā-sañchaya-Buddhacharita-sūtra*. Tao-an has a preface to the *Abbidharma-vibhāsha-śāstra, in which he states*: "In the 19th year of Chienyuan's reign, of former China dynasty, of northern China (383 A.D.) there was an Indian monk named Sanghabhuti, who came from Kashmir and recited *Abhidharma-vibhāsha-śāstra*,

which was written by Sitavani. It was at Chao-chien's request that he translated the *śāstra* into Chinese".

Saṅghadeva or Gautama Saṅghadeva was a *śramaṇa* from Kashmir, who in 383 A.D., arrived at Chang-an, the then capital of the former Tsin dynasty. He was a constant friend of Saṅghabhūti and another scholar named Dharmanandi who was a Tokharian, and the three translated several texts together. Of his works, three are mentioned in Nanjio's Catalogue. They are: *Madhyamāgama, Tridharmaka-śāstra* and *Abhidharma Hṛidaya-śāstra.* The last one, which is mentioned elsewhere as '*Abhidharma-jñānaprasthāna-śāstra*' seems to be a revised and complete version of Dharmanandi's work and has won immortal fame for him. He had been in Lu-shan and Nanking to carry on his translation work and stayed on in China till his death.

Kumārajīva.[2] of all the Indian scholars, who went to China, Kumārajīva's name stands as the foremost. The forefathers of this scholar were hereditary ministers of a country in India. But his father Kumārāyana forsook this rank and went to Karashar in Central Asia, where he became the highest religious preceptor of the king and later on married Jivā, the king's younger sister. Kumārajīva, whose name is the combination of the names of his parents, was born in Kuchi. His father was well-educated, honest and charitable, and retained his Indian mode of life. Afterwards he became a Buddhist monk and devoted his life in the propagation of Buddhism in the country of his adoption.

Kumārajīva became a monk at the age of seven and lived with his mother, who was already a nun, in a Buddhist temple. Two years later, when Kumārajīva was nine, she took him to Kashmir where, under the famous teacher Bandhudatta, he studied Buddhist literature and philosophy and soon became proficient in them. After completing his studies, he visited a number of important Buddhist places of Central Asia, together with his mother. He became renowned as a great scholar. He studied the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* under the instruction of Vimalāksha, but later on when he learnt the Mahāyāna doctrines

from one Sūrya Soma, he became enchanted with them and from that time onward entirely devoted himself to the propagation of Mahāyānism. He could even convert his former teacher Bandhudatta also into Mahāyānism. In A.D. 383, Karashar was destroyed by Lu Kwan, the commander-in-chief under the former Tsin dynasty, who killed the king of the country and captured Kumārajīva, as was customary in those days. He stayed with Lu-Kwan in Liang-chew, China, till 401 A.D. The Chinese emperor Yao-Hing or Yao-Ch'ang invited him repeatedly and he arrived at Chang-an by the end of that year. From that date till A.D. 412, Kumārajīva lived and worked in the Chinese capital of Chang-an. He was made the *Rājya-guru* or National professor'. As *Rājya-guru* he enjoyed immense power and lived in a specially-built hall from where he preached to numerous people. He translated more than one hundred Sanskrit texts into Chinese and prepared correct rendering of Chinese Buddhist scriptures. The works of Kumarajiva, which included not only the perfect translations of Indian texts but also some independent compositions, were very elegant in their style and artistic in expression, which fact was hitherto rare in Chinese religious writings. The reason was that Sanskrit Buddhist texts were translated by monks from Central Asia or India, who were not conversant with Chinese terms and the Chinese monks who helped them, were not acquainted with Indian thoughts and expressions in Sanskrit. As a result, the translations made by their joint efforts were incomprehensive even to the Chinese people. At the instance of the king, Kumārajiva revised the texts and duly corrected their defects with the assistance of about eight hundred of his disciples.

It is well-known to the scholars of Buddhism that *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* is an important text of the Mahayanists. As such Kumārajīva's works contained translations of a series of *Prajñāpāramitā* texts : Of them mention may be made of the *Panchaviṁśati Sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Nanjio No. 3); *Daśasāhasrikā P.P.* (Nanjio 6); *Vajrachchhedika P.P.* (Nanjio 10); *Prajñāpāramitāhṛidaya Sūtra* (Nanjio 19); '*Prajñāpāramitā* on a benevolent king who protects his country' (Nanjio 17). of the above texts, the *Daśasāhasrikā* . . . has no corresponding text in Sanskrit, it is presumed that the *Ashṭhasāhasrikā*

Prajñāpāramitā was transformed into *Daśasāhasrikā*, which became very popular. But the most popular text in the *Prajñāpāramitā* series was the *Vajrachchhedikā Prajñāpāramitā*, which is said to have influenced the educated Chinese minds more than anything else. It is its great popularity that induced scholars like Paramārtha, Hiuen Tsang, I-tsing and others to translate it again and again in subsequent periods. The *Prajñāpāramitā hṛidaya sūtra* in a condensed form of the *Prajñāpāramitā* text in which the idea of *Śūnyata*, —the central conception of Mahāyāna—is expressed in a small compass.

The life and works of Nāgārjuna and those of Aśvaghosha are the monumental works of Kumārajīva. The *Mādhyamika Kārikās* of Nāgārjuna and their commentaries by Āryadeva are also translated by Kumārajīva. The Sanskrit name of the commentary, which is lost, is '*Prāṇyamūla Śāstra Ṭikā*' (Nanjio 1179). It is from Kumārajīva's translation only that its existence is known.[2] He also translated the *Śataśāstra*, one of the principal treaties of the *Mādhyamakas* by Āryadeva, along with its commentary by Vasubandhu.[3]

Kumārajīva is further credited with the translation of the *Satyasiddhi Śāstra* of Harivarman (Nanjio 1274), an author who is rather unknown in India but who became very well-known in China through Kumārajīva's translation of his work, so much so that a popular philosophical school named Satyasiddhi school came into existence in subsequent period (about A.D. 502-597 A.D.).

He also translated Nagarjuna's *Daśabhūmi*, a part of *Avataṁś-aka* (Nanjio 1180), Vasubandhu's *Bodhichittotpāda Śāstra* (Nanjio 1218), *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (another epoch-making work), *Saddharma-puṇḍarika*; *Sūtrālaṁkāra* of Aśvaghosha (?). The smaller *Sukhāvati Vyūha* was translated into Chinese for the first time by him. The *Mahāyāna Brahmajāla Sūtra* (Nanjio 1087) which is different from the Pali text of the same name, but which became 'the principal code of law among the Chinese Buddhists', was also translated by Kumārajīva. The same purpose stimulated Fa-Hien to visit India at the same time, both were busy on the same job in each other's country. His great command on both Sanskrit and Chinese, added to his great scholar-ship in all the branches of Philosophy and helped him to interpret the

Mahāyānist philosophy in China for the first time. He had disciples from many parts of China who assisted him in his academic works. He is credited to have 'ushered in a new epoch in the history of Buddhism in China'. Like so many Indian scholars, Kumārajīva also spent the rest of his life in China. After Kumārajīva's death, there were political troubles in Chang-an for a long time, so a large number of Buddhist monks left for other places.

The other scholars from Kashmir, who helped Kumārajīva in his translation work, were Punyatara or Pūṇyatrāta[5] and Vimalāksha.[6] Both of them went to China in A.D. 404 and A.D. 406 respectively; and Puṇyatrāta is said to have translated *Sarvāstivāda-Vinaya*[7] in collaboration with Kumārajīva. A disciple of Puṇyatrāta named Dharmayaśas, who is credited with translating two or three works, joined them in A.D. 407. *Vimalāksha* is said to have been a teacher of Kumārajīva in Karashar and was a great exponent of Vinaya. He went to China when Kumārajīva was at the peak of his glory. He also translated two works, one of which was lost. After Kumārajiva's death, he went southward and died at the age of 77.

Another important scholar from Kashmir was Buddhayaśas,[8] who was born in Brahmin family over and above studies in all Brahmanical works, he studied both Hinayana and Mahāyāna literature and finally became a Buddhist monk. He was in Central Asia when the king of Kashgar invited him along with three thousands monks for some religious function. The king was deeply impressed by his scholasticism and invited him to stay in the palace. There he met Kumārajīva and both of them studied together for some time, or, according to some scholars, Kumārajiva studied under him. During the invasion of Karashar, in which Kumārajīva was taken as a hostage, the king of Kashgar went to help the king of Karashar, leaving the young prince in the charge of Buddhayaśas. He lived in Kashgar for ten years and then one year in Kuchi from where he went to China to work with Kumārajīva.

Buddhayaśa's translations were not many in number, but the few he did are very important ones. Among them is the *Dīrghāgama* (Nenjio No. 545), one of the Sarvāstivāda texts which he translated

with the aid of the monk Fo-nien who was well-known both as an erudite scholar and an able interpreter, and also another five hundred monks. This work brought him a lasting fame. Another important text which he translated is the Mahāyāna-*Ākāśagarbha-bodhisattva Sūtra* (Nanjio 68), the original of which is lost; but it is often quoted in Śāntideva's *Śikshāsamuchchaya*. It describes five root sins which are to be avoided by princes and eight sins which the young novices are liable to commit; and the way to get rid of them is prescribed as the worship of the Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha. He also translated the Vinaya text of the Dharmagupta school (Nanjio 1155) which was the principal code of conduct in the Buddhist institutions of China for a long time, until it was supplanted by the *Mūla-Sarvāstivāda Vinava*, introduced by I-tsing in the seventh century A.D. After Kumārajīva's death, he went back to Kashmir. He is said to have been a man of strict principles and refused any present from any body, even from the king. A monastery was built for him in China, from where he preached his religion. Kumārajīva held him in such a high esteem that even at the ripe old age of sixty years, he would approach Buddhayaśa for the solution of any doubt.

Dharmakshema or *Dharmaraksha* was a Śramaṇa from Central India. His father died when he was very young but his mother gave him good education. He studied Hīnayāna literature and became well-versed in it, but later on, he realised the supremacy of Mahāyāna and started learning it, which he continued for twenty years. Having some trouble with the local rulers he left his own country and went to Kashmir but that country being predominantly a Sarvāstivādin centre he did not gain much favour there. So he left Kashmir and passing though Central Asia went in A.D. 421 to Western China, which had become an independent principality under some Hūṇa king. The king was attracted by his fame and asked him to preach Buddhism in his territory and translate sacred texts. But Dharmakshema took some time to learn Chinese properly and then translated a number of texts. Mention may be made of his translation of *Mahāsaanipāth Sūtra* (Nanjio 81), *Karuṇā-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra* (Nanjio 142) *Bodhisattva-charyā-nirdeśa* (Nanjio 158) *Upāsaka-śīla-sūtra* (Nanjio 1089), *Suvarṇaprabāsa-sūtra* (Nanjio 127), *etc.* He also translated the *Buddhacarista* of

Aśvaghosha in Chinese, which, it may be mentioned incidentally, was also translated by I-Tsing at a later date.

His patron king, in spite of being a Buddhist, was not a lover of peace and was always engaged in warfare. Once he was defeated in such a warfare and being enraged at his failure, ordered all young monks to be disrobed, though later on he reverted his orders. His fame reaching far and wide, he was invited by the third ruler of the Northern Wei dynasty, but on his way near the capital, he was assassinated by an agent of the Lian king on the suspicion that he might be involved in a conspiracy against the Lian king in favour of the Wei king. Twelve works ascribed to him are available in the Chinese records.

Buddhajīva was another monk from Kashmir, who arrived in Nanking in China in A.D. 423. He translated into Chinese three works with the collaboration of two Chinese monks, of which one is lost. The rest two are : *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya* and *Prātimoksha* of the Mahīśāsakas. He was a teacher of Vinaya, a Vinayadhara of the Mahīśāsaka sect. Fa-hien was still a ive when Buddhajīva arrived at Nanking and being the fittest person to do the job, he was given to translate the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya*, which Fa-hien brought from India.

The Kashmirian monk named *Dharmamitra* went to Tun Huang in China in A.D. 424 after living at Ku-cha for several years. He was attracted to Buddhism from a very young age and obtained permission from his parents to leave the household life. He studied under a number of eminent teachers. He constructed a big monastery at Tun-huang and later on, after preaching at different places, went to Nanking where he preached the *Dhyāna* doctrine at Nanking and Chin-chow. He also preached Buddhism in the Hui-chi division at the request of the Magistrate there, who was a patron of Buddhism. He died there in his 87th year.

Another illustrious son of Kashmir, who went to various countries with the message of the Buddha, was *Guṇavarman*, a scion of the royal family of Kashmir. He abdicated the throne to become a monk and went to Ceylon to preach Buddhism. He travelled in Java and

also is said to have introduced Buddhism there. When Java was attacked by hostile forces Guṇavarman gave his opinion to the king that it was not against the Buddhist rules to punish rebellions. He attained prominence and his fame and personality induced the Chinese emperor to invite him to his country, which he accepted. Guṇavarman embarked in a vessel owned by a Hindu merchant and after visiting many a country, reached Nanking in A.D. 431. He lived in a monastery named Jetavana-vihāra, named after the same one in India, which was built specially for him at Nanking. He is credited with translating ten to eleven texts among which mention may be made of *Ārya-Nāgārjuna-Bodhisatva-Suhṛillekha.* He is said to have preached *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* and *Daśabala Sūtra* at the monastery of Jetavana (in China) for several months. Before Guṇavarman's arrival in Nanking, there was an Indian monk named *Iśvara*, who undertook, at the request of the magistrate of Pangchan, to translate the *Samyuktābhidharma-hṛidaya Sūtra.* He translated nineteen chapters, then gave up the attempt. In the meantime, Guṇavarman reached Nanking and was requested to complete it. Guṇavarman not only completed the text in thirteen volumes, but also translated the *Upāli-paripṛichhā* in a number of volumes, before he died at the age of 65.[9]

Guṇabhadrā, a *śramaṇa* of Central India, who was a Brahman by caste and nick-named 'Mahāyāna', on account of being well acquainted with the doctrine of Mahāyāna, though he was well versed in all branches of Brahmanical learning as well as the Hīnayāna literature. In A.D. 435, he arrived in China via Ceylon and lived for some time in the monastery of Cloud Hill. Among his important works, mention may be made of the *Mahāyāna Saṁyukta Āgama*, a copy of which was brought by Fa-Hien from Ceylon thirty years earlier; a Sutra of *Ratna-Kāraṇḍa-vyūha* of Mahāyāna; a translation of Vasumitra's *Abhidharma-prakaraṇapāda-Śāstra* of the Sarvāstivāda, a branch of the Vaibhāshika school, asserting the reality of all phenomena. He also translated the two important texts of the Dharmalakshaṇa school. During this time, the Dharmalakshaṇa doctrines were being introduced into China, after it became popular in India.

Mention may be made of his translations of the Mahāyāna works like *Śrīmālā Simhanāda Sūtra* (Nanjio 58), *Ratnakāraṇḍa-Vyūha* (Nanjio 169) *Gunakāraṇḍa-vyūha*, *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, as well as a few Hīnāyāna works like Milinda Pañha. He died in 468 A.D., in his 75th year of age. He translated 76 works in 34 years, of which only 28 are extant.[10]

Dharmajātayaśas or Dharmakritayasas and Gunavṛiddhi, two monks from Central India who went to China in the years A.D. 481 and A.D. 492 respectively translated a number of works. The former is credited to have translated a work named *Amitārtha Sūtra*, and the latter three works, two of whose names have come down to us.[11]

Bodhiruchi whose original name 'Dharmaruchi, was changed by order of the Empress Wu Tso-thien. He was a *Tripiṭakāchārya* and was a monk from south India, a Brahmin of the Kaśyapa family. He went to Lo-yang in A.D. 508, after crossing the Pamirs and the deserts of Central Asia and translated fifty three works in A.D. 693-713. He died at an advanced age.

A monk from Central India named Pramiti and a monk from Udyāna, named Meghaśikha, together with a Chinese monk Hwai-ti by name, translated one text in A.D. 705.

Another missionary who has left his name in the Chinese records, is *Upaśūnya*, a prince from Ujjaini who became a monk. He translated three works between A.D. 538 and 541, in the capital of the Eastern Wei Dynasty. In A.D. 545 he went southward to the capital of the Liang dynasty (Nanking), where he translated one work. Afterwards he produced one more work under the Shan Dynasty. In 565, he translated one Sutra named *Suvikrānti Vikrami Pariprccha*[12] the Sanskrit text of which he received from a *Śramaṇa* of Khotan whom he met in China in A.D. 568.

One of the more illustrious monks to have gone to China, is Paramārtha, also known as Kulanātha, the Buddhist scholar from Ujjain, who became proficient in Buddhist literature in all its branches. He was sent to China in the middle of the sixth century A.D. by the king of Magadha, probably a Gupta ruler, at the request of Wu-ti, the

first ruler of the Liang dynasty, who wanted original Mahāyāna texts and an Indian scholar able to translate them. He took a large collection of manuscripts with him and reached Nanking where he was received with great honour. Till A.D. 557 he translated ten works when political trouble disturbed his work. Afterwards he translated about forty works under the Shan or Chen dynasty. Numerous works are ascribed to him, of which the most important to mention is the life of Vasubandhu as well as the translation of the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa Sūtra* (Nanjio 134). He lived in China till his death in A.D. 559.

Of the Indian Buddhist monks, who acquired the greatest distinction not only in China, but also in Japan, was Bodhidharma,[13] a prince from Kāñchipuram—probably a son of one of the Pallava kings—in South India. He reached China during the reign of Wu-ti, the same king who invited Paramārtha. His miraculous practices have made him almost semi-mythical and they are still today a favourite theme of the Chinese artists. "His arrival in China is an important epoch in its religious history. Hitherto the form of Buddhist doctrine most prevalent there was that which taught the practice of morality, as the means of deliverance. But now the mysticism which had developed itself gradually in India was imported full-blown into China". He spent nine years in meditation facing a wall, by which he received the name 'Wall-gazing Brāhmaṇa". The form of religion preached by him was called 'chan' in china and 'zen' in Japan where also he preached his religion later on. He was regarded as the twenty-eighth apostle in the list of Chinese apostles. Both in China and Japan, temples were built in honour of Bodhidharma. In Japan, he is known more commonly by the name 'Daruma', *i.e.*, Dharma.

We learn about a few more scholars from India, regarding whom nothing much is known. Of them, mention may be made of Dharmaruchi, a *śramaṇa* of South India, who translated three works in A.D. 501-07; Ratnamati, from Central India, who in A.D. 508 translated three or more works; Bodhiruchi, from Northern India, who arrived in Lo-yang in A.D. 508 and till A.D. 535, translated thirty or more works. Buddhaśānta,[14] also from Central India who translated

about ten works in between A.D. 524-550, some of which were done under the Wei dynasty. He worked at the white-horse monastery at Lo-yang and at Yeh; he translated ten works of which Āsaṅga's treaties on Samparigraha Sūtra is worth mentioning.[15] Gautama Prajñāruchi, from Varanasi, who in between A.D. 516 and 541 translated about eighteen works. He is said to have been born in a Brahmin family but later on became a Buddhist.

Narendrayaśas, a *Śramaṇa* of Udyana of North India, translated seven works in A.D. 557-68. In A.D. 582-85, he translated further eight works. He died in A.D. 589.

Three monks from eastern India, Jñānayaśaa or Jñānabhadra, Yaśogupta and Jinayaśas, together translated six works in A.D. 564-572.

Two monks, Buddhabhadra and Vimokshasena or Vimoksaprajñā Rishi, both of whom claimed descent from the Śākya family of Kapilāvastu, are said to have settled in North-Western provinces from a very early date due to political trouble in their own country. When Buddhabhadra was in Kashmir, a Chinese monk, who accompanied Fa-Hien, came there, and requested the Buddhist community there to send a learned scholar. Accordingly, Buddhabhadra went to China *via* Burma and Tonkin and joined Kumārajīvā.

Another monk from the same place, *i.e.*, Gandhara, of the name of Jñānagupta or Jinagupta,[16] translated a considerable number of texts from A.D. 561-592. He was the pupil of Jñānabhadra and Jinayaśas mentioned above and accompanied them to China. Owing to political troubles, they were forced to leave China and on their way back halted in the country of the Turks at the request of the Turkish emperor. Jinagupta's teachers died there but he continued his missionary activities. He went back to China sometime later and died there in A.D. 600.

Gautama Dharmaprajñā or Dharmajñāna was an *Upāsaka* of Varanasi and the eldest son of the Brahmana Prajñāruchi mentioned above. After the destruction of the northern Tshi dynasty, he was

appointed by the northern Chou dynasty as the governor of the Yan-sen district, so that he was more commonly called by his Chinese epithet. He was again called back to the capital of the Sui dynasty, where he translated some works, of which only one is available.

Dharmagupta, another famous monk, was born in Lāṭa (Southern Gujarat) and studied with some learned teachers in the Kaumudisaṅghārāma at Kanauj. He stayed in the royal monastery named Deva-vihāra in the Punjab for some time and then proceeded to China. He followed the overland route through Afghanistan, staying on his way at Kapisa, Badakhsan, Wakhan and Tash Qurghan. He spent two years at the royal monastery of Kashgar and proceeded by the northern route. He passed through Kuchi, Karashar, Turfan and Hami. These were all flourishing centres of Buddhism and their monks were eager to profit by the learning of the great Indian monk. So after staying a year or two in each of these places, Dharmagupta reached Chang an in. A.D. 590. In addition to the usual activity of translating Buddhist texts, he is said to have composed a treatise giving minute geographical details of all the countries visited by him, and even noting down such topics like their system of government, social and economic condition, food and drink, dress, education, manners and customs. Such a book from an Indian author would have been a unique literary production and of great historical value but unfortunately no copy of the book has survived. Several other works are attributed to him. He died in A.D. 619.[17]

Prabhākarmitra or Prabhāmitra was a *śramaṇa* of Central India, and a Kshatriya by caste. In A.D. 627, he arrived in China and translated three works and died in A.D. 633.

Puṇyopāya, a *śramaṇa* also from Central India, arrived in China in A.D. 655, bringing with him a collection of more than fifteen hundred different texts or copies of the *Tripiṭaka* of the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna schools. He made this collection in travelling throughout India and Ceylon. In A.D. 656, he was sent by the Chinese emperor to the country of 'Pulo Condore' island in the China sea to find some strange medicine. Having returned to China in A.D. 663, he translated eighteen works.

Vajrabodhi, a monk from Malaya in south India, who was a Brahmin by caste, arrived in China in A.D. 719 and translated four works in two years. He died in China.

Another monk, who claimed descent from the Śākya family, was Śubhakarasiṁha, a scion of the family of Amritodana, an uncle of Śākyamuni Buddha. He lived in Nālandā Monastery. In A.D. 716, he arrived in Chang an, the then capital, bringing with him many Sanskrit texts. He translated four works by A.D. 724 and died in A.D. 735.

Amoghavajra a disciple of Vajrabodhi mentioned above, was a monk from north India. Some scholars have, however, described him as an inhabitant of Ceylon. He also was a Brahmin by caste. He arrived in China to meet his teacher who in his death-bed, a few years later, instructed him to go to India and Ceylon to collect some texts. Accordingly Amoghavajra left China in A.D. 741 and returned in A.D. 746. Then the emperor bestowed on him the title Prajñā-kosha. Afterwards, he was permitted to go back to his own country, but the permission was withdrawn and he had to return to China from half the way. From the south-sea country, where he was halting, he was called to the capital in A.D. 756, and resided in a monastery. In A.D. 765, he received, besides an official title, an honourable title also. On the birth day of the emperor Tai-tsun, in A.D. 771, he presented to the court, his own translations with a memorial, in which the following passages occur: "From my boyhood, I served my late teacher, *viz.*, Vajrabodhi, for fourteen years and received his instructions in the doctrine of Yoga. Then I went to the five parts of India and collected several Sūtras, more than five hundred different texts, which had hitherto not been brought to China. In A.D. 746, I came back to the capital, and from the same year till the present time, I translated seventy-seven works". In A.D. 774 he died in his 70th year when the emperor gave him, besides the official title of a minister of state, the posthumous title of '*Tripiṭaka-bhadanta*'. Thus he was held in high esteem at the court of successive sovereigns of the Than dynasty. Under his influence, the Tantra doctrines, dealing with talismanic forms and profession of supernatural power, first gained currency in China.

Mention also may be made to Vinītaruchi, a Brahmana from South India, or, according to Dr. P.C. Bagachi, from Uḍḍiyāna, who went to China by the third quarter of the sixth century A.D., translated two works there and then proceeding to Tonkin, founded the Dhyāna School there.[19]

There were many more Indian Buddhist scholars who went to China during the period under review, but not much details of them are available. Sometimes only the name of the author without the works done is available, sometimes only the name of the texts without that of the translator. So we leave them out of our account presented here.

B. Chinese Missionaries in India

As stated in the beginning, the visits of the Indian missionaries into China, was not an one-way traffic. Many Chinese pilgrims reciprocated the zeal of Indian scholars by visiting India and having a direct contact with Indian life and cultures, as we learn from their records.

The earliest Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to leave a detailed record of his visit to India is Fa-Hien. From the early years of the Christian era when Buddhism penetrated into China, there was a constant interchange of Buddhist missionaries between India and China. But the Chinese missionaries who visited India before Fa-Hien, did not enter into the innermost parts of India, but were satisfied with the few Buddhist scriptures they could collect from the North-Western borderlands. They invited and took with them Indian missionaries to preach Buddhism in China and to translate Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. Many Buddhist scriptures were translated into Chinese before the time of Fa-Hien by the joint efforts of Indian and Chinese scholars, but these translations were full of errors. Fa-Hien was aggrieved at the imperfect rules of discipline observed by the monks of his native country and started for India to collect original copies of religious books which were yet unknown in his own country. On the other hand, at the same time, the emperor of his native land, Yao-Hing, had brought the famous Indian Buddhist scholar Kumārajīva to China to

prepare correct versions of the scriptures with the aid of 800 Chinese priests as well as the king himself. Mention has already been made about the activities of Kumārajīva and other Indian scholars in China in this period.

In the early years of the 5th century A.D. (399-414) Fa-Hien started from his native country and entered India through the North-Western land-route. Crossing the Tsung-Ling mountains and through much difficult and tiresome journey, he reached the Udyana country, where he found the law of the Buddha in a flourishing condition, having about five hundred monasteries, all belonging to the members of Hīnayāna. When any foreign monk came to them, they entertained him with all his requisites for three days. He also saw the foot-prints of the Buddha there. In the Swat country also he found Buddhism in a flourishing condition. This statement of Fa-Hien is also corroborated by the Buddhist inscription found from Swat. Fa-Hien passed through Gandhāra, Takshaśilā and Purushapura. At Purushapura (modern Peshawar), he found 700 priests living in a monastery and paid reverence to the alms bowl of the Buddha. In the *vihāra* of Hidda (in the Jalalabad district) was preserved the relic of the skull-bone of the Buddha, kept with great care together with some other relics. There was also a monastery with seven hundred priests. In Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries, he saw numerous devotees of both vehicles. In the Punjab also he found a large number of devotees who were astonished to see him come from such a distant land and treated him with great hospitality. In Mathura he found Buddhism in a reviving condition, on the banks of the Jamuna there were twenty monasteries sheltering about three hundred monks. The Buddha images and inscriptions discovered at Mathura also testify to the flourishing condition of the religion in this area. Fa-Hien states that all the kings of Western India were firm believers of Buddhism which, of course is not corroborated by other known facts. Fa-Hien speaks highly of the administration and moral organisation of the people of Madhyadeśa or the Middle Country. From very early days the kings, nobles and other persons of all these countries erected monasteries and granted 'lands, houses, gardens and also men and oxen to cultivate them'. These grants were recorded in copper plates

for perpetual continuance. The resident priests received all their requisites from the monasteries, and when new monks arrived in the monastery, they also were provided with board and lodging according to their age and seniority. The monks erected *stūpas* in honour of Sāriputra, Moggalāna and Ānanda, the chief disciples of the Buddha, and also in honour of three *Piṭakas* or Buddhist scriptures. The nuns erected *stūpas* mainly in honour of Ānanda, because it was he who persuaded the Master for the admission of women into the Buddhist church. And the novices erected *stūpas* for the worship of Rāhula, the son of the Buddha. Those who had special leanings towards *Vinaya* or *Abhidharma*, paid homage to the respective works and those who professed Mahāyāna paid reverence to the Mahāyānic gods and goddesses such as Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara and Prajñāpāramitā. At Saṅkāśya the place where the Buddha is said to have descended from the thirty-third heaven, after preaching his religion to his mother (identified with modern Sankisa-Basantapur)—the Chinese pilgrim saw many places associated with various legends of the Buddha's miraculous activities. At Kanauj, the pilgrim found two monasteries, both belonging to the Hīnayānist faith. The pilgrim visited the Kośala country and its capital Śrāvastī—modern Saheth-Maheth—which was at that time almost deserted and occupied by very few inhabitants. He saw the ruins of the Jetavana-vihāra, the Pubbārāma-vihāra, dedicated by Migāramātā Viśākhā and other places famous in Buddhist literature as associated with the life of Gautama Buddha. Standing at that place, the heart of the pilgrim was filled with a strange feeling to think that it was the place where the Buddha once lived and roamed, but his friends who accompanied him but could not finish the journey could not see these places. The local monks were also very much surprised to see them come from such a distant land like China. In this place there was a group of followers of Devadatta, they paid reverence to the three past Buddhas *viz.*, Krakusanda, Kanakamuni and Kāśyapa, but not to the Buddha Gautama. The city of Kapilāvastu, place of the Buddha's father, was also found by the pilgrim in a deserted condition and the roads there were infested with white elephants and lions, so people seldom traversed the roads and even if they ever passed through them they did it

most cautiously. In the city, there were a few monks and about ten families of lay people. Towers erected on various memories of the Buddha's life were seen by the pilgrim. Rāmagrāma was one of the eight countries which were recipients of the last relics of the Buddha's body. Fa-Hien visited the temple erected over the relics here. He also gives the interesting story as to how king Aśoka, who intended to break the last of the eight *stūpas* enshrining the Buddha's relics here and was resisted by a dragon who guarded the relic-tower and refrained from doing so. Buddhist priests lived in the temple even at the time of the visit of Fa-Hien. At Vaiśāli, the pilgrim saw the Mahāyāna vihāra and the mango-grove presented to the Buddha by the courtesan, Ambapāli. He also visited the spot where the second Buddhist council was held a hundred years after the Buddha's demise for settling the dispute relating to the ten points of discipline. At Pāṭaliputra, he saw the ruins of the palace of Aśoka. By the side of the tower of king Aśoka, the pilgrim found a "very imposing and elegant" monastery belonging to the Mahāyāna system, as also another belonging to the Hīnayāna faith. The monasteries of Pāṭaliputra certainly had great educational activities, because the pilgrim states that in the two above-mentioned monasteries there were altogether six or seven hundred priests and eminent scholars who lived together in the college section of these monasteries and whoever wished to learn something would run to these institutions. But, strangely enough, we hear from no other source about the monastery-college of Pāṭaliputra. Recent excavations carried at Kumarahar in Patna, which have brought to light the remains of *stūpa*, a chaitya hall and several other Buddhist remains—appear to throw some light on this, though much remains yet to be discovered in order to have a comprehensive idea of the nature of the institutions mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim.[20] As is surmised from the description of the pilgrim, there was probably also an image of Mañjuśrī installed in one of these monasteries, which belonged to the Mahāyānists. The people of this country is described by the pilgrim as prosperous and virtuous and the towns were large. The pilgrim describes the annual procession of images in this country. "On this occasion, they construct a four-wheeled car and erect upon it a tower of five stages, composed

of bamboos lashed together, the whole being supported by a centre post resembling a large spear with three points, in height twenty-two feet and more. So it resembles a pagoda. They then cover it with fine white linen on which they afterwards paint all sorts of gay coloured pictures. Having made figures of all the Devas and decorated them with gold, silver and coloured glass (lapis lazuli), they place them under canopies of embroidered silk. Then at the four corners (of the car) they construct niches (shrines) in which they place figures of Buddha, in a sitting posture, with a Bodhisattva standing in attendance. There are perhaps twenty cars thus prepared and decorated each one different from the rest. During the day of the procession, both priests and lay-men assemble in great numbers. There are all sorts of games and amusements (for the latter) whilst the former offer flowers and incense in religious worship. Then all night long, the people burn lamps, indulge in games and make religious offerings. Such is the custom of all those who assemble in this occasion from the different countries round about".

From the above account we may very well notice the change in the form of Buddhism and its tendency towards merging into Hinduism. The religious procession displaying images of the Buddha was beyond the imagination in primitive Buddhism. When this religious procession came into practice is not known, but that it continued long enough is also testified by the evidence of Hiuen-Tsang. And it might also be the precursor of the present day procession of Lord Jagannātha in Orissa.

Fa-Hien also saw some inscribed monuments of Aśoka in Pātaliputra. The monastery of Nālandā, far from beginning its educational activities, had only a nominal existence, if it existed at all during the visit of this pilgrim; because he does not refer to any monastery visited by him in this locality. He only mentions the village Na-la which was the place of birth as well as decease of Sāriputra, one of the chief disciples of the Buddha. The tower erected in honour of Sāriputra was also visited by him. At Rājagṛiha, the new capital built by Ajātaśatru after abandoning the older

Girivraja, the capital of his father Bimbisāra—he found two monasteries. Rājagṛiha and its neighbourhood played a significant part in the history of early Buddhism. It was here that the Buddha spent most of his mendicant period and it was the venue of many an important events in his life, as are narrated in Pali and other Buddhist literature. But when the pilgrim visited the place, it was all in ruins and deserted, and hardly inhabited by any human being. The mango-grove of Jīvaka was there, but in ruins. The pilgrim saw the place where the mad elephant Nalagiri was charged against the Buddha. At Gṛidhrakūṭa, Fa-Hien burnt incense sticks and paid reverence to the memory of the Buddha. He spent a night there chanting *Suraṅgama Sūtra,* which the Buddha is said to have preached there, and meditating. He was very sad that everything was there as it was during the time when the Buddha was alive, only he was not there and Fa-Hien was unfortunate not to see him. He also saw the Saptaparni Cave where the first Buddhist Council was held. The Karaṇḍa-veṇuvana-vihāra was still in existence and a number of monks kept the ground around it swept and watered. The township of Gaya—where the Buddha attained supreme knowledge—was likewise deserted. But there were towers and figures of the Buddha erected over the place where the Buddha practised austerities, walked to and fro, after attaining Buddhahood. There was also the stone-slab on which he sat while meditating. There were also three monasteries occupied by priests who conformed strictly to the rules of discipline laid down by the Lord. That the religion of the Buddha continued to flourish at the place of its birth in this and also in subsequent periods is also testified by numerous inscriptions and sculptures. At Sārnāth, where the Buddha first turned his wheel of Law, *i.e.*, where he first preached his religion and where he predicted about the future Buddha Maitreya. The extant Dhamekh Stūpa, was seen by the pilgrim. The description of Sarnath by Fa-Hien is not very elaborate, he only mentions to have seen the ruins of a *Vihāra* and a congregation of monks belonging to the Hīnayāna system. But that Buddhism had a great centre at Sarnath during the same period is well testified by the numerous inscriptions, sculptures and the images of the Buddha and

Bodhisattvas found at this site during the course of excavations. At Kauśāmbī, in the *vihāra* named Ghochiravana (might be the Ghositarāma of the inscription found there) Fa-Hien found a company of monks, most of whom were Hīnayānists and at some distance of this monastery there was another monastery which might have contained more than a hundred monks.

The main object of Fa-Hien to come to India was to collect copies of the *Vinaya-piṭaka.* But as the tradition of India was at that time to transmit the rules orally from preceptor to pupils, he found it very difficult to procure one as long as he came up to the Madhyadeśa. At last, at Pātaliputra, he was able to get a copy of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* containing the rules used by the Mahāsāṅghikas, which contained an account of the first Buddhist Council also, in a monastery belonging to the Mahāyānists. There was a tradition that this copy originally belonged to the Jetavana Vihāra. All the eighteen schools into which the Buddhist church was divided, during this period, had separate *Vinayas* of their own. All of these agreed with one another in general principles, but their difference lay in minor details. The copy of which Fa-Hien obtained was said to be the most complete one with correct explanations. He further received a transcript of the rules in seven thousand *gāthās* or *ślokas,* belonging to the Sarvāstivādin school which also had been handed down from preceptor to pupils orally, without ever being written down. This was similar to that used in China. Moreover, he obtained here an imperfect copy of *Saṁyuktā bhidharma-hṛiadaya-śāstra* containing about six thousand *gāthās.* In addition, he also got a collection of *Sūtras* of twentyfive hundred *ślokas,* an expanded volume of the *Parinirvāṇa-vaipulya-sūtra* consisting of about five thousand *ślokas* and a copy of *Abhidharma* of the Mahāsāṅghikas. To collect and copy these, Fa-Hien had to live at Pāṭaliputra for three years, engaged in learning to read, write and converse in Sanskrit language, and copying texts.

At the country of Champa, Fa-Hien saw two towers erected in memory of the Buddha, where there were a few priests. The sea-port of Tāmaralipta was a flourishing centre of Buddhism,having twenty-four Saṅghārāmas and numerous devotees. Here the pilgrim lived for

two years, copying sacred books and taking impression of Buddhist figures. He sailed for the island of Ceylon from the port of Tāmaralipta. Though he did not visit the southern countries, he gives description of a rock-cut monastery of Kaśyapa Buddha at the Deccan, which was a five storey edifice and had numerous chambers. The description does not tally with any of the rock-cut monasteries of the Deccan, or was he speaking of one of the multi-storied rock-cut *vihāras* of Ellora ? The exaggeration might not be impossible, as the pilgrim must have narrated it from hearsay.

In Ceylon the religion of the Buddha was very flourishing and Fa-Hien was able to procure a copy of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* of the Mahīśāsaka school,[21] the *Dīrghāgama* and *Saṁyuktāgama*[22] and also the *Saṁyukta-sañchyapitaka*[23]—all of which were unknown in his native land—in course of the two years that he lived there. That Buddhism was prevalent in Ceylon at that period is also testified by the inscriptions of Ceylonese monks found at Bodh-Gaya recording some religious gifts.

The pilgrim also visited Java and Malay peninsula, where he found the religion of the Buddha well-established.

Two other Chinese Buddhist monks, *viz.*, Chih-meng and Fa-Yong came to India just after Fa-Hien, even before his return. The former was accompanied with 14 others, of whom only 5 including himself, reached Pāṭaliputra where they secured copies of the *Mahāparinirvaṇa sūtra* and *Saṅghika Vinaya*. The latter belonged to a party of 25, of whom 5 only were the survivors to reach Kashmir by land route, where their leader Fa-Yong collected a copy of the '*Avalokiteśvara Mahāsthāma Prāpta Vyākaraṇa Sūtra*'. They went back by ship through south India.[24]

Another Chinese traveller who visited India in the early part of the 6th century A.D., was *Sung-Yun*, a native of Tun-Wang in little Tibet. In 518 A.D., he was deputed by the Empress of the Wei dynasty from Lo-yang to India to offer religious presents to Buddhist sanctuaries on behalf of the Empress and also to search for Buddhist scriptures. He was accompanied by Hwui-Seng. He followed the

southern route to Central Asia. He did not enter into the interior of India, but travelled in the North-West border-lands of India for three years visiting the places associated with the memories of the Buddha's activities in those places, after which he returned to China collecting one hundred and seventy-five volumes of Buddhist scriptures. After Bodhidharma's death, Sung-Yun inspected his remains. From his narrative about the condition of Buddhism in India at least in the country's border-lands, which he visited, it seems that during this period, "Buddhism had become corrupt by the introduction into its code of the practice of magical art. The use of charms and the claim to magical powers, do not appear to have belonged to the original system. Buddhist teaching was, in the first instance, connected principally with Morals. After a few centuries, however, the simplicity of its doctrine was corrupted and fabulous stories were invented and local superstitions permitted, to please the people and advance the power of the priests—especially among the Tartar tribes, who, like all Northern races, were particularly given to superstitions. We read, therefore, that several priests were put to death for practising magical arts. The account given of their leader in these arts, is that he used wild magic to win followers, taught them to dissolve all ties of kindred, and aimed only at murder and disturbance.[25]

The next illustrious Chinese pilgrim to visit India was Hiuen-Tsang. He travelled more into the interior of India than did Fa-Hien and has left a detailed account of India during the time of his visit. His account is a mine of information not only for the condition of Buddhism of that period, but for information related to social, political and other aspects also. He speaks not only of the particular sects or sub-sects of Buddhism, which prevailed in different localities, but also of the royal or civil personages who patronised or were antagonistic to the religion.

Leaving his native place at an early age, Hiuen-Tsang arrived in India in about 630 A.D., following the northern route to Kafiristan through Central Asia. He lived in India for fourteen years, residing at important centres of Buddhism and travelling throughout the country and collecting Buddhist texts and relics. The change in the

religion during the period intervening between the visit of Fa-Hien and that of Hiuen Tsang is clearly discernible from the latter's record. During the time of Fa-Hien, though both the schools of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism were existing in the country, there seems to be no sharp line of demarcation between these two and the advocates of both the schools lived side by side in friendly co-operation, sometimes even in the same monastery. During the time of Hiuen Tsang the gulf between the two schools had become wider, the Mahāyāna gradually gaining stronger footholds and the Hīnayāna gradually receding in the background; and rivalry of supporters of both the schools became much more pronounced. Hiuen Tsang mentions in detail the names of sects in different places. His account of the contemporary sects may here be noted in brief. Some places like Lampa, Palusha city, Taxila, the region around the Manikiyala Stūpa, Ku-lu-ta, Pi-lo-shan-na, Mahasala, Svetapura, Magadha, Tiloshikiya monastery, Kosala, Odra, *etc.*, were exclusively Mahāyānist, and though Taxila itself is described as a centre of the Mahāyānists, its neighbouring places like Purushapura, Pushkalavati, Sakala, *etc.*, were Hīnayānist. Other places where the followers of the Hīnāyāna still held the ground were the Tamasāvana monastery, the Pariyātra country, Sthānesvara, the Srughna country, the place near Guṇaprabha's monastery in the Matipura region, Govisāna, Prayāga, Kauśāmbī, the Chan-chu country, Champā, Samataṭa and the Drāviḍa country, the two last named being centres of the Sthavira school of the Hīnayānists. Of other sects of the Hīnayānists, the Sammitiya school had their centres at Ahicchatra, Kapittha, Ayamukha, the Vishoka country, Śrāvastī, Kapilāvastu, Vārānasi, Sarnath, Vaiśālī, Hiraṇyaparvata, Karṇasuvarna, Mālava, Valabhī, Ānandapura, Sindh, A-tien-po-chih-lo, Pi-to-shih-lo and A-fan-tu (Avanti ?). In places like Kashmir, Jalandhara, Mathura, Kānyakubja, Ayodhya, the Vriji country, Nepal, Puṇḍravardhana, the Koṅkan country, Mahāraṣtra, Ujjain, *etc.*, the adherents of both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna lived in co-operation.

Though Kashmir is known to be a great centre of the Saravastivādins at that period and though the pilgrim spent about two

years there, he does not speak of the particular sect which was predominant there. Other centres of the Sarvāstivādins as stated by Hiuen Tsang were Udyāna, the Tamasāvana monastery, Matipura, Navadevakula, the Kapotaka monastery, the neighbourhood of the Hiraṇyaparvata and the Gurjara country. He found the Mahāsāṅghikas at Udyāna and Dhanakaṭaka. The followers of the Mahīśāsaka and Kāśyapiya sub-sects of the Sarvāstivāda school were also seen by him at Udyāna. A peculiar statement made by him about the Buddhists or Broach, Sūrat, the Mahabodhi Saṅghārāma (at Bodh-Gaya), Kaliṅga and Ceylon, is that they were all 'Mahāyānists of the Sthavira school'. The statement, though apparently anomalous, is a further proof of the fact that the demarcation line between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna was not very well defined and both followed the same disciplinary rules.[26] At Karṇasuvarṇa, the pilgrim saw the devotees of Devadatta. Kāmarūpa, later a famous centre of mystic rituals, probably had its beginning as such already at that time, because Hiuen Tsang is said to have found 'secret devotees' at Kāmarūpa. The monastic establishment of Nālandā, though not even mentioned by Fa-Hien, is described very elaborately by Hiuen Tsang. He states that the nucleus of the monastery of Nālandā was built for the first time by a certain king Śakrāditya by name, which went on increasing constantly by his successors, *viz.*, Buddhagupta, Tathāgatagupta Bālāditya and Vajra respectively. Another unnamed king from North India is said to have built another large monastery there. The fame of the educational institution of Nālandā was spread far and wide, and students of this institution were treated with great honour and respect. As such, in order to gain such respect or any other privilege pertaining to the students of this institution, some would even falsely represent themselves as students of this institution. The rules of admission were very strict and only two or three out of ten were able to get themselves admitted.

The pilgrim also speaks of several eminent teachers of Nālandā, *viz.*, Dharmapāla, Chandrapāla, Guṇamati, Sthiramati, Prabhāmitra, Jinamitra, Jñānachandra and Śīlabhadra, who had deep and profound knowledge and intellect and whose works were well-known and

appreciated highly even at that time. Hiuen Tsang spent his student days at Nālandā under the last named teacher. Not only these teachers, but other scholars of Buddhism, who had great reputation on their side in this period, like Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Saṅghabhadra, Dharmatrātā and such others, are also mentioned by the Chinese pilgrims. His narrative is also full of numerous legends which are mostly in some way or other, connected with Buddhism.

The pilgrim speaks in a glowing manner about Harshavardhana, king of Kanauj and his benevolent activities in favour of Buddhism. He says that Harsha was devoted to Buddhism and prayed to an image of Avalokiteśvara before his accession and ascended the throne after obtaining encouragement and assurance from the deity. "He erected thousands of topes on the banks of the Ganges—and erected Buddhist monasteries at sacred places of the Buddhists. He regularly held quinquennial convocation; and gave away in religious alms everything except the material of war. Once a year, he summoned all the Buddhist monks together and for twenty-one days supplied them with regulation requisites." A great assembly organised by king Harshavardhana was held at Kanauj during the pilgrims' stay there. He is also said to have rewarded the true followers of the Buddhist codes and punished those who resorted to malpractices. His sister Rājyaśrī is also described as a devout Buddhist and embraced the life of a nun after the death of her husband. She is said to have been well-versed in the Sammitiya doctrines. Hiuen Tsang is said to have seen a tooth-relic of the Buddha in a *Saṅghārāma* near the palace of king Harshavardhana. Among the Buddhist monasteries said to have been established by king Harsha, one is said to be constructed by the side of the monastery of Nālandā which was covered by brass plates.

Hiuen Tsang travelled far and wide into this country studying at different places under various teachers and collecting Buddhist scriptures and also collecting relics and images of the Buddha. He found the religion gradually waning in the extreme north-west, excepting Kashmir, and the extreme south of India but quite flourishing in

the other parts. This statement is also corroborated by archaeological evidence.

After spending long fourteen years, Hiuen Tsang returned to his native country, where he was received with great honour. He carried to his country 657 volumes of Buddhist scriptures which comprised of 224 *sūtras*, 192 other *sūtras*, 15 works of the Sthavira school which included their *Sūtra*, *Vinaya* as well as *Śāstra* literatures, the same number of literature of the Sammitiya school, 22 works of the Mahīśāsaka school, 67 of the Sarvāstivādin school, 17 of the Kāśyapiya school, 42 of the Dharmagupta school, 36 copies of Hetuvidyā, 13 copies of Śavdavidyā, *etc.*, as well as a number of relics and images of the Buddha. He began to work with the volumes he brought with him and during his lifetime he wrote and translated altogether fifty-eight books including the famous Si-yu-ki or *The Records of the Western World.*

Shortly after the death of Hiuen Tsang, another illustrious Chinese pilgrim, *viz.*, I-Tsing, resolved to visit India and reached the port of Tāmralipti in about 673 A.D., proceeding through the Sou-thern sea route via Nagapatam and Ceylon. He was, of course, not the immediate successor of Hiuen Tsang, not less than fifty-six other Buddhist pilgrims from China and the bordering districts having visited India and the neighbourhood during the intervening period. These pilgrims came either by the Southern sea route or along the deserts and mountains by the Northern route. The account of their journey, the hardships and dangers experienced by them on their way, as also the difficulties confronted by them for inadequate accommoda-tions and lack of proper arrangements in the absence of any temple assigned exclusively for the Chinese pilgrims and such other things are elaborated by I-Tsing in his book entitled *Kau-fa-kao-sang-chuen* in two volumes.[27] I-Tsing lived at the famous *vihāra* of Tāmralipti called 'Varāha Vihāra' for three years. He learned Sanskrit and translated the *Suhṛillekha* of Nāgārjuna[28] while residing there. He also studied at Nālandā for a considerable period and collected a large number of Sanskrit texts. The record left by I-Tsing is shorter than the two preceding ones of Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang, it being only

the enumeration of the religious life and practices of India, especially the details of the dissenting points of the *Vinaya* rules of different schools of Buddhism. He concentrates his discussion particularly on the practices of the Sarvāstivāda school.

I-Tsing found all the eighteen schools of Buddhism prevalent in India grouped under four principal divisions, *viz.*, the Sarvāstivādins, the Mahāsāṅghikas, the Sthavira or Theravādins, and the Sammitiyas or Vātsiputriyas. All these schools had their separate *Triṭakas.* Of these, the Sarvāstivāda or Mūla-sarvāstuvāda school had four sub-divisions under it, *viz.*, the Mūlasārvastivāda, the Dharmagupta, the Mahīśāsaka and the Kāśyapiya. The *Tripiṭaka* of this section comprised of 300,000 verses. The Sarvāstivāda school predominated in Northern India and the southern sea islands and was most flourishing in Magadha. The adherents of this school were scarce in number in Lāṭa, Sindhu and Southern India and a few in Eastern India, where there were devotees of other schools also. Followers of Dharmagupta, Mahīśāsaka and Kāśyapiya schools were rare in India proper, but there were a number of them in the bordering countries like Udyāna, Kharasar *etc.* The Mahāsāṅghika school had seven sub-divisions under it. The *Tripiṭaka* of this school also comprised of 300,000 *ślokas.* The adherents of this school were scattered all over the country —in Magadha, in Lāṭa and Sindhu, as also in the north, south and eastern portions of India, but nowhere in a very large number. The Sthavira or Theravāda school was sub-divided into three sections and had also the *Tripitaka* in 300,000 *ślokas* like the other two schools mentioned above. It was mostly in practice in south India, but also had some place in eastern and western India. The Sammitiya school had four sub-divisions and a *Tripiṭaka* of 200,000 *ślokas*, of which the *Vinaya* comprised 30,000 verses. It had its stronghold in Lāṭa and Sindhu, but was also practised in Magadha and southern India. Eastern India sheltered all the various schools of Buddhism, among whom were the different subsects of the Sammitiya also. The southern sea islands also had members of this sect during the visit of I-Tsing.

I-Tsing states that the followers of the Mahāyāna worshipped the Bodhisattvas, but not the Hīnayānists. He makes mention of the Mādhyamika and Yogāchāra systems of philosophy of the Mahāyāna and says, "the Mādhyamikas regard all outward phenomena as empty and substantially unreal", while "the Yogas regard outward things as nothing, inward things as everything. Things are just what they appear to cognition. And so with respect to the sacred doctrine, it is true to one and false to another; there is no positive certainty for all. The great aim is to reach 'that shore', and to stem the tide of life".

After visiting more than thirty countries, I-Tsing returned to Ho-nan via Śribhoja or Palembang towards the close of the 7th century. He carried with him about four hundred distinct volumes of the three scriptures (*viz.*, *Sūtra*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidharma*). He had a mind to stay at Śribhoja for some time and so he sent home his work about the Buddhist practices in India, through another Chinese priest who was then returning . . . and after returning home, he himself was engaged in translating and interpreting Buddhist texts with the assistance of some nine Indian priests like Īśvara, Sikshānanda, *etc.*, Between 700 and 712 A.D., he translated and compiled 56 works in 250 chapters.

Ou-kong or Śramaṇa Dharmadhātu was another young Chinese priest who visited India after I-Tsing.[29] He was intelligent from his childhood and at that time there being a friendly relation and an interchange of Buddhist missionaries between China and Kashmir, the Kashmirian king having sent religious teachers to China from the royal families, he resolved to visit Ki-pin or Kashmir.[30]

He reached Gandhāra, then the eastern capital of Kashmir, in 753 A.D., after a journey of more than two years. He was received with great favour by the king. In 759 A.D., he was admitted into a monastery at Kashmir and was put under three teachers, *viz.*, the *Upādhyāya*, the *Karmācharya* and the *Ācharya*, who imparted to him the knowledge of the *Vinaya*. In the convent of Moung-ti, he studied the *Śīlas* and when that was finished, he studied and practised the *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins. Ou-kong states that there were more than three hundred *vihāras* in the kingdom of Kashmir and also

considerable number of *stūpas* and images. He further states that these were founded by king Aśoka and five hundred *Arhats*. He mentions the names of some of the monasteries, *viz.*, the Amitābha-vana Vihāra, the Ānanda Vihāra, the Ki-tche, the Nao-ye-la Vihāra, the Je-je Vihāra, the Senāpati Vihāra, *etc.* That the Sarvāstivādin school predominated this part of India is also supported by his statement.

Ou-kong gives a description of the kingdom of Kashmir which was surrounded on all sides by hills, thus forming natural barrier against the outside world—with occasional channels through them. Here he lived a few years labouring untiringly, offering adoration to temples and learning Sanskrit. Then he went once again to Gandhāra and lived in the monastery of Jou-lo-li, which bore the name of its founder king, who is said to have been a descendant of king Kanishka. There he found a large number of monasteries established by the wife, son, brother and other relatives of the king, which bore their respective names. He also saw the *stūpa* and monastery founded by king Kanishka, which contained some relics of the Lord Buddha. He spent there two years, after which he undertook to a pilgrimage to the sacred places associated with the memories of the Buddha. Thus, he visited Kapilāvastu, the Mahābodhi Vihāra near the Bodhimaṇḍa (at Bodh-Gaya), the Ṛishipatana Mṛigadāva (Sārnāth) at Varanasi, the Gṛdhrakūṭa mountain, the scene of the *Sadharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*—at Rājagṛha, Vaiśālī, where the Buddha resolved to die, the city of Devāvatāra (Saṅkāsya), where the stairs of heaven touch the earth while coming down from heaven—(by which the Buddha came down from the thirty-third heaven), Śrāvastī, where in the garden of Jetavana given by Anāthapiṇḍika, the Buddha preached the *Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā* to save them, who were going out of their way, and the city of Kuśīnagara, where, in the forest of twin Śālas, the Buddha entered *Nirvāṇa*. He resided at each place for some time, paid homage to the *stūpas* and made offerings of food, *etc.* Then he resided three years in the monastery of Nālandā. Then he came back to the kingdom of Udyāna, where he lived in the monastery of Mang-ngo-po. He found two other monasteries there called the monasteries of Sukhāvatī and Padmāvatī respectively.

Then he was eager to return to his own country and asked permission of his superior, who refused it absolutely at the first time. After his earnest request twice or thrice he, however, granted his desire and himself gave him the original Sanskrit versions of the three *sūtras*, *viz*., the *Daśabala Sūtra*, the *Bhavasaṁkrānti Sūtra* and the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, which together form one book. He also gave him one tooth-relic of the great saint Śākyamuni. He (Ou-kong) put those things on his head, and took leave of his preceptor with tearful eyes. He was willing to embark a ship for return, but remembering the difficulties which he had to encounter on his inward journey, he decided to return by the northern route by land. He had to face a good deal of difficulties following this route too. After reaching home, he translated the three *sūtras* mentioned above—which he received as presents from his preceptor. Though Ou-kong travelled over many parts of North India, his record does not throw much light on the condition of Buddhism at that period.[31]

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3. P.K. Mukherjee, *ILCFE*, p. 104.
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6. Nanjio 1160.
7. P.K. Mukherjee, *ILCFE*, p. 87.
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12. P.K. Mukherjee, *ILCFE*, p. 184; Nanjio 9, 144.
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14. P.K. Mukherjee, *ILCFE*, p. 174.
15. Ibid., pp. 174 f.; Nanjio 1189.
16. P.K. Mukherjee, *ILCFE*, pp. 190 f; *The Classical Age*, p. 600.
17. P.K. Mukherjee, *ILCFE*, p. 194.
18. *Ibid.*

19. cf. P.C. Bagchi, *India and China*, p. 228; *BEFEO, XXXIII*, p. 235.
20. ASI Excavation report on Kamrahar.
21. Nanjio I 182.
22. Nanjio 545 and 504.
23. Miscellaneous Collections—cf. Nanjio *Catalogue*, Div. IV of the canon.
24. cf. Chon-Hsiang-Kuang, *Indo-Chinese Relations*, pp. 55 ff.
25. Beal, *Fa-Hien*, Introduction.
26. cf. *The Classical Age*, p. 371.
27. For the names and brief account of the pilgrims cf. Beal, *Life*, pp. xxvii ff; also cf. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. X (1881).
28. It should be noted that the '*Suhṛillekha*' of Nāgārjuna was translated once more previously into Chinese by the Indian monk Gunavarman in the 5th century.
29. cf. J.A. 1895, p. 342 ff. A few other Chinese pilgrims visited India during the period intervening between I-Tsing and Ou-kong, but their records are not readily available. cf. that of Hui-Chau.
30. Though Ki-pin had different identifications at different times, here at least it denotes Kashmir.
31. *Journal Asiatique*, 1895, pp. 342 ff.

4

Religious and Secular Writings of India concerning Buddhism

I BUDDHIST TEACHERS AND LITERATURE

The imperial Guptas as well as the emperor Harsha were great patrons of scholarship and would always stretch their bounteous hand in aid of scholars irrespective of religion. The traditional Vikramāditya of Ujjain, whose court is said to have been adorned with 'Nine Jewels' including Kālidāsa and the famous Buddhist logician Dignāga, is generally identified with a Gupta king, most probably Chandragupta II. Hiuen-Tsang tells us that a certain Gupta king Bālāditya was the patron of the famous Buddhist teacher Vasubandhu. In subsequent times, Buddhist scholars found a great patron in Harsha, king of Kanauj. Stimulated by the cultural atmosphere created by the favourable disposition of the imperial rulers as well as lay people, many eminent Buddhist teachers flourished in this period whose works are mines of knowledge and of perpetual interest. Though these works are mainly religious treatises either on philosophy or on logic, they are of immeasurable value and have considerably enriched not only the Buddhist but Indian literature in general. The life and works of some of them are discussed below. As Mahāyāna was the leading faith of the time, almost all of them were adherents of Mahāyāna.

Maitreyanātha : The teacher of Ārya Asaṅga called 'Mirok' in Chinese who is said by Hiuen-Tsang to have revealed to his disciple some Buddhist treatises while he was living in the Tushita heaven and the pupil was at Ayodhya. He is not a mythical being, but a historical personage 'who lived 900 years after the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha'. Mm.H.P. Sastri places him between A.D. 150 and 265. But this would bring a great difficulty on the way of his being the preceptor of

Asaṅga, who certainly lived in the later part of the 4th if not in the 5th century A.D. So about 400 A.D. might be the more plausible date for Maitreyanātha.

Maitreyanātha is said to be the real founder of the Yogāchāra school of Buddhist philosophy which hold the theory of *Vijñānavāda*, according to which "nothing exists in this world except consciousness. Thus, like the theory of Śūnyavāda, it denies the reality of this phenomenal world, but at the same time asserts some form of existence in consciousness". "The practice of *Yoga*, which is also an important factor of Hīnayāna", is given more stress in the Yogāchāra philosophy, which prescribes ten stages (Daśabhūmi) of the practice of *Yoga*, by passing which one may attain *Bodhi*.

Of the works of Maitreyanātha - the Abhisamayālaṁkāra-Kārikā, which is also known as *Prajñā-pāramitopedeśa-śāstra* (the Sanskrit text and Tibetan translation of which has been edited by Stcherbatsky and Obermiller).[1] The work is, according to Stcherbatsky, "the fundamental work for the study of the Buddhist doctrine of the path towards moral purification and the attainment of the condition of a Buddhist Mahāyānist saint and of a Mahāyānist Buddha in the blessed Nirvāṇa". The *Saptadasabhūmi-śāstra-yogācārya* and *Bodhisattva-charyānirdeśa* have been translated into Chinese and also the Sanskrit version of these books have come down to us. *Mahāyāna-Śūtrālaṁkāra Kārikā*, which was discovered and attributed to Asaṅga by S. Levi, seems to be the work of Maitreyanātha.[2] The book though written in verses, expresses more philosophy than poeticism and is written in eloquent Sanskrit. The discussions he makes in his works are mainly on the practical logical questions such as the kinds of debate, the occasions of debate, the attributes of the debator, defeat, *etc.* But sometimes he discussed pure logic also. According to him, a thesis should be supported by a reason and two examples. Validity of the reason and of the examples requires that they should be based either on fact or on another inference or holy sayings, analogy or comparison being ignored by him.[3] Other works attributed to Maitreyanātha are : *Yogavibhaṅgaśāstra* (now lost), *Madhyānta—vibhaṅga*, *Vajrachchhedikā-pāramitāśāstra* and *Uttaratantra*. Hiuen-Tsang speaks of Maitreyanātha as Bodhisattva Maitreya who lived in

the Tushita Heaven and was to be the future Buddha. The Tibetan tradition ascribes five works to Maitreya, *viz.*, *Sutrālaṁkāra*, *Madhyānta-vibhaṅga*, *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhaṅga*, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and*Uttaratantra*.[4]

Ārya Asaṅga : Though the real founder of the Yogāchāra school of Buddhism was Maitreyanātha, his disciple Asaṅga is credited with the name of 'the founder of Yogāchāra'. The reason might be that it was by Asaṅga's efforts that the Yogāchāra school gained popularity.

Asaṅga, or Vasubandhu Asaṅga, called in Chinese 'Mucak', was born in Purushapura, modern Peshawar, in a Brāhmin family and was the eldest of the three brothers, all of whom were designated Vasubandhu, which might be their family name. The three brothers were Vasubandhu Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and Vasubandhu-Viriñchivatsa, of whom the two elders are famous in Buddhist literature. All the three brothers were at first followers of the Sarvāstivāda school of Hīnayāna and Asaṅga belonged to the Mahīśāsaka sect and followed the Vaibhāshika doctrines of the Hīnayāna. But later on, Asaṅga became the disciple of Maitreya and followed the Yogāchāra school of the Mahāyāna. He is said to have lived in the middle of the 5th century A.D. According to Taranātha, Asaṅga lived 12 years of the later part of his life at the monastery of Nālandā as the head of the institution, teaching and preaching Yogāchāra and was succeeded by his more illustrious brother Vasubandhu. Hiuen-Tsang states that Asaṅga lived for some time at Ayodhyā and it was here that the Bodhisattva Maitreya revealed three treatises to him. These three treatises are mentioned by Hiuen Tsang by name and their Indian renderings are : *Yagāchārabhūmi-śāstra*, (Mahāyāna) *Sūtrālaṅkāra-ṭīkā* and *Madhyānta-vibhaṅga-śāstra* respectively. Of these texts, the first one was translated into Chinese by Hiuen-Tsang himself together with some other monks. Hiuen-Tsang visited the ruins of the places of temporary residence of Asaṅga at Ayodhyā and Kauśāmbī.

Many Buddhist works of importance are attributed to Asaṅga. But these have come down to us only in Chinese and Tibetan versions, the original Indian works being lost. One of his works named *Mahāyāna-Samparigraha-Śāstra*, is available in Chinese translation and

summaries of his logic are to be found in some volumes of later texts like *Prakaraṇārya-vāchā Śāstra* and *Mahāyānābhidharma Saṁyukta-Sangīti-Śāstra*.[5] Both were translated by Hiuen-Tsang. He is said to have written bulky commentaries on the *Prajñā-pāramitā sūtras* and as such in *Sādhanamālā*, a Buddhist Tantric work of about the eleventh century A.D., Asaṅga is mentioned as the author of a *Sādhana* dedicated to the worship of *Prajñā-pāramitā*. It is not very much credible for Asaṅga to have written any Tantric work at such an early period but there seems to have been a historical connection between the Yogāchāra school and the rise of the Vajrayāna, as Tāranātha says that Tantricism was handed down by secret means from the time of Asaṅga; and B. Bhattacharya says that Asaṅga really had some part to play in connection with the rise of Vajrayāna. Some other scholars also uphold the same view.[6]

Asaṅga wrote commentaries on most of the works of his preceptor *viz.*, Maitreya. Obermiller is of the opinion that the style of both the treatises as well as the commentaries are very much similar and hence both might be the works of Asaṅga. The attribution of the texts to his preceptor is only to ascribe a divine origin to them. Asaṅga died at the age of 75. He is said to have made some improvements on the methods of logic put by his master.

Vasubandhu : Of the three Vasubandhu brothers, the middle one *viz.*, Vasubandhu is the most illustrious in the history of Buddhist literature. Like his elder brother Asaṅga, he also was born at Purushapura. Their father's name was Kauśika and their mother Viriñchi or Bilindi, from whom the youngest brother received the name of Viriñchivatsa or Bilindibhava. He was at first a follower of the Vaibhāshika School of Philosophy of Hīnayāna, but was converted to Mahāyāna Yogāchāra School by his elder brother Asaṅga at an advanced age. Hiuen-Tsang tells us that the famous Buddhist teachers like Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Manoratha, Dharmatrāta, *etc.*, were inhabitants of the country of Gandhāra and he saw the place where Vasubandhu lived and wrote his famous book *Abhidharmakosha*. He was a friend of Manoratha, a Vaibhāshika master who flourished in the middle of the 5th century A.D. as also the contemporary of

Saṅghabhadra, a native of Kashmir and a profound Vaibhāshika scholar, who also lived in the later part of the 5th century. So Vasubandhu can very well be placed in the middle of the later part of the 5th century A.D. But the date of Vasubandhu is a much disputed problem. Professor Takakusu fixes the date of Vasubandhu as A.D. 420-500 on the basis of Paramārtha's "*Life of Vasubandhu*". According to Paramārtha the patron of Vasubandhu was king Vikrāmaditya of Ayodhyā, who was first a patron of the Sāṁkhya school but later on became a patron of Buddhism through the influence of Vasubandhu.[7] A much disputed *śloka* in Vāmana's *Kāvyālaṁkāra-sūtra-vṛitti* mentions a son of Chandragupta to be the patron of Vasubandhu. The *śloka* runs thus :

> "So' ayang samprati Chandragupta-tanayaś' chandraprakāśo yuvā Jāto bhūpatirāsrayaḥ[8] kṛitādhīyang diṣṭyā kṛitārthaśramaḥ."

The dispute arises on the explanatory line below this verse which runs :—

> "Āśraya kritādhiyamityasya Vasubandhu sācivyopakṣepaparatvāt sābhiprayātvaṁ"
>
> (Bani Vilas Press Edition)

Another edition has another explanation :—

> "Āśraya kṛitādhiyamityasya ca Subhandu sacivyo ...." (Vidyavilas Edition, Benaras)

According to Dr. D.R. Bhandarkar, the reading 'Vasubandhu' is correct and not the reading 'Ca Subandhu'. So it indicates that a son of Chandragupta was the patron of Vasubandhu. But dispute again arises on the identification of the son of Chandragupta who was the patron of Vasubandhu. According to some scholars, it is Kumāragupta I, the son of Chandragupta II, who succeeded him in the throne.[9] Dr. Bhandarkar identifies him with *Mahārāja* Govindagupta, son of *Mahārājadhirāja* Chandragupta II and *Mahādevī* Dhruvasvāminī, mentioned in the Basarh (ancient Vaiśāli) seals[10] and he also states that this Govindagupta had the title *Bālāditya* which confirms the statement of Hiuen-Tsang that a certain Gupta

king Bālāditya was the patron of Vasubandhu and also that of Paramārtha who states that Vasubandhu lived during the reign of Bālāditya. But this Bālāditya of Paramārtha has been identified by Takakusu on the evidence of Paramārtha with Skandagupta, who favoured Vasubandhu with special patronage together with the Queen Mother both of whom became his disciples—when Vasubandhu was at Ayodhyā.[11] E. Frauwallner is of opinion that there were two persons bearing the name of Vasubandhu. Of these, the earlier one, the brother of Asaṅga, lived before 400 A.D. while the author of the *Abhidharmakosha* is a different and later one.[12]

Of the many works attributed to Vasubandhu, the most important is the *Abhidharmakosha*, a monumental work which has made the name of its author immortal and even bright in the world of Buddhist literature. But, unfortunately enough, the original book in Sanskrit is lost, and what we find to-day is not the *Abhidharmakosha* of Vasubandhu, but the commentary of the text by Yaśomitra called *Abhidharmakosha-vyākhyā* and the Tibetan and Chinese versions of the original book. The Chinese translations were made first by Paramārtha and then about a century later by Hiuen-Tsang. "The Abhidharmakosha treats, in 600 memorial verses or Kārikās together with the author's own commentary, of the entire field of Ontology, Psychology, Cosmology, Ethics and the doctrine of salvation. Though written from the standpoint of the Sarvastivada School of Hīnayāna, the book is nevertheless an authority for all schools of Buddhism."[13]

The *Abhidharmakosha* gained such popularity that there is a traditional saying that in the 7th century even the parrots could expound the *kosha* to one another. Bāna, in his Harshacharita says :—

> "Triśaraṇaparaiḥ paramopāṣakaiḥ śukairapi śākyaśāsana-kusālaiḥ kośaṁ samupadisadhiḥ"[14]

From the explanatory portion of the *Kosha* we can also learn about the dogma of the Buddhist Schools and the relation between the *Vaibhashikas* and the *Sautrāntikas*. Yet it is the final authority of any dogmatic disputes. In China and Japan, it had been largely used

as a text book and numerous commentaries have been written on it. Brāhmanical teachings, particularly that of the Vaiśeshika school has been criticised by Vasubandhu in his Abhidharmakosha and numerous arguments have been put against them.

Both Hiuen-Tsang and Paramārtha give an interesting story about Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra. The latter wrote a large book in refutation of the *Abhidharmakosha* of Vasubandhu and when it gained much fame, he informed Vasubandhu that he wished to have a discussion with him. But Vasubandhu replied that he was not willing to enter into any dispute because he was aged and ill but suggested him to discuss it with the learned teachers of the middle country. On his way to the middle country, Saṅghabhadra died and before that wrote a letter of apology and sent it to Vasubandhu together with his own work. Vasubandhu was moved to read the dying man's letter and going through his work, he remarked that though it was not perfect in doctrine, it was well-written and out of regard for the Vaibhāshika standpoint from which it was written and which he himself professed formerly, he preserved it in the same condition and did not refute the arguments put in it, though it was very easy for him to refute.

Of the other works attributed to Vasubandhu, mention may be made of *Gāthāsaṁgraha*, a book written in verse in the manner of the *Dhammapada*, the ideas contained in them being Hīnayānist in chara-cter. The commentary portion of it reveals the humorous side in the character of the philosopher Vasubandhu. The work is extant in Tibetan only.

Two other classical works of Vasubandhu are the *Viṁśatika* and *Triṁsikā* written from the standpoint of the Yogāchāra philosophy and propound the doctrine of *Vijñanavāda* or reality- con-sciousness.

In the *Abhidharmakosha*, arguments against the *Vaiśeshikas* were put forward; the *Paramārtha-saptati* was written by Vasubandhu controverting the philosophy of the *Sāṁkhya* system. The *Vajrach-chhedikā-prajñā-pāramitā* and commentaries on the *Saddharmapuṇḍa-rīka*, the *Mahāpārinirvāṇa-sūtra* and Mahāyāna *sūtras* are some of the

other works supposed to have been produced by Vasubandhu. The Tibetan list adds some other treatises, *viz.*, *Pañchaskandha-prakaraṇa, Vyākhyāyukti, Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* and some commentaries.

The genius Vasubandhu passed away at the age of 80 years at Ayodhyā. It was in the late years of life that he was converted to Mahāyānism by his elder brother Asaṅga and became a follower of Yogāchāra. In his earlier days when he was a Hīnayānist, he abused the Mahāyānist views very strongly and now after his conversion he became so repentant for his previous treatment that it is said that he was ready to cut off his tongue which had uttered the abuses. But Asaṅga refrained him from doing so and told him that his real penance would be to employ his tongue in praise of his present adoption. This he did with right earnestness and it was from this time that he wrote the beautiful treatises on Mahāyāna.

Dignāga : The first person to write any authoritative work on Buddhist Logic in a systematic way, is Dignāga. He is supposed to have lived in the last part of the 5th or the early part of the 6th century A.D. Before his time, Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu dealt with some form of Logic in their philosophical works, but they were only incidental references in course of the discussions on the Vaibhāshika or Yogāchāra philosophy. There was not a single work absolutely on Buddhist Logic. Hiuen-Tsang is said to have seen three books on pure Buddhist Logic written by Vasubandhu, but they have been completely lost and nothing can be judged of their merit. From the middle of the 5th century A.D., *i.e.*, from the time of Dignāga, started a period when Logic started to be treated as a specified subject and a number of eminent scholars devoted their attention to the development of Buddhist Logic.

The father of medieval Indian Logic, Āchārya Dignāga was born in a Brāhmin family in Siṁhavaktra near Kāñchi, modern Kāñchīpuram in Tamilnadu. He was well trained in orthodox Brāhmanic teachings and afterwards joined the Vātsīputriya sect of the Hīnayāna Buddhists, by the teacher Nāgadatta and gained proficiency in Hīnayāna scriptures. Being an object of displeasure of his teacher, he was expelled, and after leaving his institution he became the disciple

of Vasubandhu, from whom he gained great knowledge and erudition not only in *Yogāchāra* but in the Mahāyāna philosophy in general. He is said to have been blessed by Mañjuśrī, the Buddhist god of learning, which means that he acquired proficiency in Buddhist learning. He was invited to Nālandā to hold controversy with some eminent Brāhmin scholars headed by one named Sudurjaya in which the condition was that he who would be defeated, would embrace the religion of the person who vanquish him. Dignāga came out victorious and as a result converted his opponents to Buddhism and received the title *Tarkapuṅgava* or 'Bull in discussion'. He attacked the Brāhmin philosophers whenever he could get an opportunity of it. In return, he himself also would be attacked by them not infrequently. This intellectual war lasted even after his death when his theories were vehemently criticised by Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Pārthasārathi Miśra. Even the Buddhist teacher Śāntarakshita in the 8th century attacked his views.

Most of the information of the life of Dignāga is received from the Tibetan sources. It related that he would often live at Orissa in a cave of a hill named Bhoraśaila, where he spent his days in meditation. He was specially versed in the incantation of formulae. He converted Bhadrapālita, the Treasury Minister of the king of Orissa, to Buddhism, to whom he showed his miraculous powers by reviving a tree which was withering away.

According to the commentary of *Meghadūta*, Dignāga was a contemporary of Kālidāsa, both of whom are said to have been two of the 'Nine Jewels', adorning the court of the traditional king Vikramāditya, who, though seemingly a Gupta king, is difficult to be identified.[15] It is said that Dignāga would criticise Kālidāsa mercilessly at every opportune moment. He is further stated to live frequently in Āchāra's great monastery at Mahārashtra. The description of Āchāra's monastery on the eastern part of the country related by Hiuen-Tsang leads Burgess to identify it with the monastic caves of Ajanta,[16] which suggestion gains some strength of support from the long inscription of the monk Achala in one of the *Vihāra* caves of Ajanta.

Dignāga is represented as a great writer. About one hundred books are ascribed to his authorship. But only one of his numerous works, *viz.*, the *Nyāyapravesa*, has come down to us in Sanskrit. The great classical work on Logic by Dignāga is the *Pramāṇa-samuchchaya.* He resolved to collect all the stray works on Logic written prior to him and compile them in a versified compendium called *Pramāṇa-samuchchaya.* It is said that when he resolved to write the book, he received heavenly approval by an earthquake, illumination and heavenly uproar. Being hindered by a Brahmin named Īsvarakṛishna (whose *Sāṅkhyasaptati* is said to have been criticised by Vasubandhu in his *Paramārtha-saptati*) who tried several times to destroy his writings, he was disheartened and when he was thinking of giving up the attempt to write, he vouchsafed the Bodhisattva-Mañjuśrī—the Buddhist God of learning—and was encouraged by Him. So he completed his monumental work with revived energy. But unfortunately his original work in Sanskrit has not come down to us, only a Tibetan translation being known to exist. The book begins thus :—

> "Bowing down before Sugata—the teacher and protector—who is Pramāṇa incarnate, the benefactor of the world, I, for the sake of expounding pramāṇa (valid knowledge), put together here various scattered matters compiled from my own works".

In the closing lines it is stated that :—

> "Dignāga, the subduer of controversialists in all regions and the possessor of elephantine strength, compiled this from his own work".[17]

The last statement seems to prove that Dignāga was not only strong in dialecticism, but possessed great physical strength also.

Other works by Dignāga are the *Hetu-chakra-hamaru, Pramāṇa-samuchchaya-vṛitti* (a commentary on the *Pramāṇa*) *Pramāṇa-śāstra-praveśa, Ālambana-Parikṣhā-Trikāla-parīkṣha. etc.* All of these works exist in Tibetan only.

Dignāga is said to have died in a solitary den in Orissa where he frequently lived a secluded life absorbed in meditation.

Bhavya or Bhāvaviveka : This eminent teacher is said to have belonged to South India, probably in the Malayagiri country. He lived in the early part of the 5th century A.D. and he himself being a disciple of Saṅgharakshita, belonged to the school of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, *i.e.*, the Mādhyamika School. He wrote commentaries on the works of his predecessors and was the founder of the Svātantra School which endeavours to establish the doctrines of the Mādhyamika School of Philosophy with the aid of independent (svatantra) arguments. The commentary on the '*Akutobhaya*' of Nāgārjuna by Bhavya has come down to us in Tibetan, the Sanskrit origin being lost. Some of Bhavya's works have been translated into Chinese. Hiuen-Tsang also translated one of his works in 648 A.D.

Being formerly trained in the Brahmanic school of Philosophy, Bhavya was well versed in *Sāṁkhya* literature and often quoted from *Sāṁkhya* texts in propagating the doctrines of Nāgārjuna.

Hiuen-Tsang, on his visit to Dhanakaṭaka saw the place where Bhavya was said to have lived inside a rock waiting to see Maitreya, when he was to become a Buddha. The pilgrim narrates the story in this way : The pious devotee Bhavya desiring to see Maitreya for the solution of his problems, began to recite a *Dhāraṇī-mantra* before the image of Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇī being abstained from food for some days whereupon the Bodhisattva came before him and gave him another *Dhāraṇī mantra* by which the cliff in the Asura's place would be cleaved and he would have to enter into it and wait; and thus his desire would be fulfilled. Bhavya did accordingly and threw some charmed mustard seeds by which the rock was opened and he entered into it, a few other men following him.[18]

The above account shows that *Dhāraṇīs* and mystic charms which are the necessary elements of Tantricism had already made their appearance in this period and Dhanakaṭaka was most probably the earliest centre of mystic rituals.

It was during the time of Bhavya that the Yogāchāra and Mādhyamika schools of Mahāyāna were finally separated and there

was a sharp contrast between the two schools. Bhavya wrote a commentary on the *Mūla-Mādhyamika* of Nāgārjuna, entitled *Prajñā-pradīpa,* in which he refuted the views of his contemporary Buddhapālita. Buddhapālita was also a native of the south and both of them were disciples of Saṅgharakshita. Among other works of Bhavya, mention may be made of the *Mādhyamika-hṛidaya* and its commentary *Tarkajvālā.*

Buddhapālita, as is mentioned above, was a disciple of Saṅgharakṣhita and was an inhabitant of the capital of Kalinga. Like Bhavya, he was also a great exponent of the Mādhyamika school, but he is known to be a founder of the 'Prāsangika' School of exponents, because he adopted the method of 'reductio ad absurdum', *i.e.,* proving a proposition by proving the falsity of its contradiction for establishing the theory of *Śūnyatā* of Nāgārjuna (and Āryadeva) in the commentary of *Mūlamādhyamika Sūtra* of Nāgārjuna.

Guṇamati, a native of Valabhī, was the preceptor of the illustrious Paramārtha and according to some scholars, of Sthiramati also with whom he lived in the same monastery at Valabhī. In his later life he went to Nālandā where he became a renowned teacher. He wrote a commentary on the *Abhidharmakoṣa* as well as at least one independent work named *Lakṣanānusāra śāstra,* which was translated by his disciple Paramārtha into Chinese.

Sthiramati was most probably a disciple of Vasubandhu rather than Guṇamati, who himself is supposed to be a disciple of Vasubandhu. He was an inhabitant of Daṇḍakāranya in the south and studied both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. He wrote a commentary on the *Triṁsikā* of Vasubandhu, another on the *Madhyāntavibhāga* as well as on the *Kāśyapa-parivarta* named Ratnakuṭa, which are extant in the Chinese version; the original Sanskrit versions of *Madhyāntavibhāga* and *Triṁsikā* have also been discovered.[19] The date of Sthiramati is difficult to decide. According to some scholars, there were more than one author of the same name.

Śaṅkarasvāmin, an inhabitant of south India, was a disciple of Dignāga. He was one of the foremost in the line of teachers who

transmitted Buddhist Logic upto Śīlabhadra, the illustrious teacher of Hiuen Tsang at Nālandā. He was the author of *Nyāyapraveśa-tarkaśāstra*, translated into Chinese.

The next illustrious exponent of the Mādhyamika School was Candrakīrti who followed the *Prāsaṅgika* method of Buddhapālita. He was born in south India, at a place called Samanta and was very intelligent from his childhood. He studied Mādhyamika Philosophy under Kamalabodhi, a disciple of Buddhapālita. He wrote a commentary on the *Mūla-mādhyamika* named *Prasannapadā*, in which he presents numerous quotations from many earlier texts, the Sanskrit originals of which have not come down to us. He used the *Prāsaṅgika* method of exposition resembling that of Buddhapālita. His chief work is the *Mādhyamakāvatāra*, which is available in Tibetan. He was an erudite scholar and wrote a number of commentaries as well as independent treatises. Mention may be made of a commentary of Āryadeva's *Chatuḥśatikā* which is a work of great literary merit, as well as *Samantabhadra*, an independent treatise in verse. He became an abbot in Nālandā, went to the south and defeated a number of scholars in disputations and converted them. He is also credited with the construction of a number of monasteries. One of his opponents is said to be the well-known grammarian, Chandragomin, whom he also appreciated and gave an honoured position in Nālandā.

According to some scholars, Chandrakīrti was the disciple of Dharmapāla, which does not seem feasible, as the latter succeeded him in Nālandā. Dharmapāla was the son of a minister of Kāñchīpuram and was very sharp in intellects. He was a master logician of the Yogāchāra school. He wrote a number of books, of which the commentary on the *Vijñaptimātratā-Siddhi*, some works on logic like *Ālambana-Pratyayadhyāna-śāstra-vyākhyā*, *Vidyāmātra-siddhi-śāstra-vyākhyā*, *Śata-śāstra-vaipulya-vyākhyā*, may be mentioned. He was succeeded in his abbothood in Nālandā by another eminent scholar Śīlabhadra, who was, again, the teacher of the illustrious Chinese monk Hiuen-Tsang. The latter saw in Kauśāmbī the ruins of the monastery where Dharmapāla vanquished the heretics in arguments.

The next prominent teacher of the Mādhyamika school, who lived in the seventh century, was Śāntideva or Śāntivarman who was also known as Bhusuka. He was the son of king Kalyāṇavarman of Saurashtra and preferred the saffron robe of a monk to that of a king. He was a devotee of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and acquired great magic powers. He went to Nālandā and became the disciple of Jayadeva, who was for some time the abbot of Nālandā after Dharmapāla. He converted a number of non-believers in the neighbourhood of Nālandā as well as some in Śrīparvata in the south. Three works are ascribed to have been written by him, *viz.*, *Śikshāsamuchchaya*, *Bodhichāryavatāra* and *Sūtrasamuchchaya*, of which the former two are available in original Sanskrit. The *Śikshāsamuchchaya* is a manual of Mahāyāna Buddhism, providing us with its commentary by the author himself. It is a very scholarly work and contains profuse quotations from the sacred texts which are no longer extant, and this fact imparts a greater value to it. The fundamental idea of Mahāyāna philosophy and the extreme self-negation and sacrifice to be practised by a Bodhisattva in order to realise the 'unreality' (*Śūnyatā*) of the phenomenal world are very nicely elucidated with numerous quotations in this text. Among the works quoted by Śāntideva in his *Śikshāsamuchchaya*, mention may be made of *Ākāśa-Garbha Sūtra*, *Upāli-paripṛichchhā*, *Ugra-paripṛichchhā*, *Vimala-Kīrtinirdeśa*, *Avalokana Sūtra*, *Ratnāloka Dhāraṇī*, *Tathāgataguhya-sūtra*, *Daśabhumikā-sūtra*, *Dharmasaṁgīti-sūtra*, *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Gaṇḍavyūha*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, *Lalita-vistāra*, *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa* and many others.

In the *Bodhicharyāvatāra*, we discover a great poet in Śāntideva-though the two texts, *viz.*, *Sikshāsamuchchāya* and *Bodhicharyāvatāra*, are apparently completely different from each other, their doctrinal standpoints as well as the ethical ideal of Bodhisattva, *etc.*, leave no doubt about their common authorship. The extreme popularity of *Bodhicharyāvatāra* is reflected by the fact that no less than eleven commentaries were written on it.

Ācarya Śīlabhadra was the abbot of Nālandā at the time of the visit of the illustrious Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang, under whom the

latter studied and of whom he speaks very eloquently. Śīlabhadra was a scion of a royal dynasty of Samataṭa in Bengal and belonged to the Brahmin caste. He was the disciple of Dharmapāla mentioned above, and became an erudite scholar and a disputant of great distinction. He was the last known *Vijñānavādin* head of the Nālandā monastery and also a great logician. He defeated reputed teachers in south India in controversies and, as a reward, received the revenue of villages with which he constructed and maintained a number of monasteries.

The illustrious Dharmakīrti was born in a Brahmin family in the Deccan in the south and probably was a nephew of the famous Kumārila. He was very brilliant from his childhood and studied all the Brahmanical scriptures including medicine and grammar. When he was only about sixteen years old, he was already well-versed in all *śāstras* and after occasionally attending discussions in Buddhism, he realised the defects of Brahmanical teachings and the merits of the teachings of the Buddha. For his strong inclination to Buddhism, he was excommunicated by his own society and went to Madhyadeśa and became a disciple of Dharmapāla. He studied all the *piṭakas* and knew five hundred *sūtras* and *dhāraṇīs* by heart. According to Tāranātha, Tantrism was handed down by secret means from the time of Asaṅga until the time of Dharmakīrti.[20] He defeated in dispute the great Brahmanical teacher Kumārila and his five hundred followers, who were converted into Buddhism. He is said to have surpassed many previous eminent teachers in the science of Logic. He wrote a number of works, some of which are extant in the original Sanskrit, of which Nyāyabindu may be mentioned as one. He wrote *Pramāṇa-varttikakārika*, criticising and commenting Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuch-chaya*, which he studied at the place of Īśvarasena, who was a disciple of Dignāga. (A commentary on the *Pramaṇavārttika* was later on written by Prajñākaragupta.)[21] A few other works are attributed to Dharmakīrti; and they are: *Pramāṇaviniśchaya*; *Hetu-bindu-vivaraṇa*; *Tarka-nyāya* or *Vādanyāya*; *Sambandha-parīkshā*; *Santānantara-siddhi*; *Sambandha-parīkshā-vṛitti*—(a commentary on *Sambandhaparīkshā* by

the author himself), most of which are available in Tibetan translations only.

Dharmakīrti is said to have been a contemporary of the Tibetan king Srong-tsan-gam-po, which seems to be credible in view of the fact that Hiuen-Tsang makes no mention of him during his visit in India in A.D. 635, when Dharmakīrti might have been too young; whereas I-Tsing, who came to India during A.D. 671-695, makes eloquent reference to him; and this date tallies with the date of the king Srong—tsan-gam-po.

The next teacher who claims a place as an eminent logician, is Devendrabodhi, who was a contemporary of Dharmakīrti and lived in about the middle of the sixth century A.D. Only one of his works has come down in Tibetan translation, *viz.*, the *Pramāṇa-vārttika-pañjikā.*

One of the opponents and contemporaries of Chandrakīrti was Chandragomin, who is very well known as a grammarian, philosopher and poet. According to some scholars, there were two Chandragomins, one senior, the other junior, their difference being a few centuries. Chandragomin was a Yogāchārin, following fhe Vijñānavāda school. The grammer written by him, the *Chāndra Vyākaraṇa* is famous in the Buddhist world. He was the son of a royal family in Bengal and was devoted to the goddess Tārā, so much so, that when, after his marriage, he came to know that his wife's name was Tārā, he abandoned her because he could not accept a lady as his wife who bore the same name as the deity he worshipped. He became a recluse and lived at a place which came to be known as Chandradvipa after him. He is said to have composed many hymns and other poetical works, of which a letter to his disciple, the *Śisyalekha dharma·kāvya* may be mentioned. His drama *Lokānanda* is available in Tibetan. Chandragomin was said to be the disciple of Sthiramati. A number of other texts, *viz.* the *Pradīpamālā-śāstra, Samvara-viṁśaka, Kāvatrayāvatāra, Tārāsādhanaśataka, Avalokiteśvara-sādhana-śataka. etc.* in addition to those mentioned above, are ascribed to him. He is credited with the compilation of the abstracts of a number of important Buddhist texts such as the *Daśabhūmika, Samādhirāja, Laṅkā-*

yatāra and *Prajñapāramitā Sūtras*. He went on tour in the south upto the island of Ceylon and spent his last days in an island, called Dhanaśrīdvīpa, where he is said to have erected temples for Avalokiteśvara and Tārā.

Śākyabodhi is mentioned as the disciple of Devendrabodhi, mentioned above. His date is supposed to be A.D. 675. He wrote the *Pramāṇavārtika-pañjikā-ṭīkā*, which is a commentary on the *Pramāṇa-vartikā pañjikā*, which itself is a commentary on the *Pramāṇa-vartikā* of Dharmakīrti. The Sanskrit original of the text is lost, but a Tibetan translation is available.

Another eminent scholar who wrote commentary on the works of Dharmakīrti, was Vinītadeva, who lived in the early eighth century. His works, the Sanskrit originals of all of which seem to be lost, comprise mostly of commentaries on different texts of Dharmakīrti, in addition to an independent work called *Samayabhedoparachana-chakra*. The commentaries which he wrote are: *Nyāyabindu-ṭīkā*, on the *Nyāya-bindu* of Dharmakīrti, the Tibetan translation of which was made by an Indian monk Jina Mitra; *Hetu-bindu-ṭīkā*, on the *Hetu-bindu* of Dharmakīrti, the Tibetan translation of which was made by an Indian scholar named Prajñā Varma. *Vādanyāya-vyākhyā*, commentary on *Vāda-nyāya* by the same Dharmakīrti. In the preface of the Tibetan version, the author expresses his obeisance to the Buddha thus: "who is self-perfected in sweet logical discussion, supreme in patience, affection, charity and self-restraint and who is the most excellent of logicians—to him (Buddha) bowing down I compose a commentary on the Vāda-nyāya."[22] *Ālambana-parīkshā-ṭīkā*, a commentary on Dignāga's *Ālambana-parīkshā*, the Tibetan translation of which was done by an Indian saint named Śākyasimha. The text begins with a salutation to the Buddha and the colophon runs like this: "Here is finished the Ālambana-parīkṣā-ṭīkā, which is a clean work of the teacher Vinīta Deva who worshipped all sorts of Ālambana (objects of thought) and is a lion of speakers confounding the brains of the Tīrthika elephants."[23] *Sambandhaparīkshā-ṭīkā* was a detailed commentary on the text of the same name by Dharmakīrti, the Tibetan translation of which was made by an Indian monk

Jñānagarbha. A commentary on the *Santanantara-siddhi* of Dharmakīrti was also written by Vinīta Deva, the Tibetan translation being made by an Indian monk named Viśuddhasiṁha. According to Vinīta Deva, the Sarvāstivadins used Sanskrit, the Mahāsaṅghikas Prakrit, the Sammitiyas Apabhraṁśa and the Sthavira or Theravādins used Paiśācī[24] languages for their scriptures, but this statement needs to be accepted cautiously, because we find almost all sects, excepting the Theravādins, using a kind of mixed Sanskrit, which has been given the name of 'Buddhist Sanskrit'.

Another commentator of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇa-vārtika*, is Ravi Gupta who is mentioned in an inscription[25] in the Gupta year 435 (corresponding to A.D. 754), as '*Sarva-daṇḍa-nāyaka*' and Mahāpratihāra', though he is supposed to have lived in the first quarter of the eighth century A.D., *i.e.*, about A.D. 725. He was a native of Kashmir and was well-known as a great poet, dialectician and Tantric teacher and was credited to have constructed a number of religious institutions in his own country and other places. The Sanskrit original of his work, *i.e.*, the commentary on Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇa-vārtikā*, is lost, but the Tibetan translation of it has come down to us.

A contemporary of Ravi Gupta, who is credited with the writing of the commentary on the Kāśikās of Patañjali, named Nyāsa, was the Buddhist Jinendrabodhi. In the Tibetan translation of his work entitled *Viśālāmala-vatī-nāmapramāṇa-samuchchaya-ṭīkā*—the original of which seems to have been lost—he is described as '*Bodhisattva-deśīya*' or 'like a Bodhisattva', a great compliment to his qualities.

The last scholar to be discussed in our survey of this period, is Śāntarakshita, though he is not the least in importance in the list of Buddhist teachers of this period. He is assigned to the date of *circa* 749 A.D., as this great philosopher and logician lived during the time to the king Gopāla of the royal Pāla dynasty of Bengal and passed away during the time of his son, the illustrious Dharmapāla. He was the scion of a royal family of Bengal and became a distinguished teacher of Nālandā. He belonged to the Svātantra Mādhyamika school and reviewed with great acuteness and scholarship the

earlier philosophical systems, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. In his *Tattva-saṁgraha* which is his masterpiece and which is extant both in Sanskrit and Tibetan,[26] he seems to have supported the *Yogāchāra* views, in refuting the views of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist dialecticians. His other works are: *Vādanyaya-vṛitti-vipañchitārtha*, which is a commentary on the *Vāda-nyāya* of Dharmakīrti, extant in Tibetan only. The Tibetan translation was made by an Indian scholar named Kumāra-śrībhadra, and *Mādhyamakālaṁkāra-kārikā*, with the author's own commentary, is a short work. It is also extant in Tibetan only. His reputation travelled beyond the boundaries of India and he was invited by the Tibetan emperor Khri-sron-lde-btsan, a successor of Sron-tsan-gam-po, to preach Buddhism in Tibet. He went there, but at the first instance, had to come back to India due to the strong opposition of the practitioners of the older religion of the country, *viz.*, the Bon, who believed in spirits and ghosts and various magic practices. He went to Tibet once more when the situation was under control under the Tantric teacher Padmasambhava and made to erect the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet at Bsam-ye on the model of Odantapuri Vihāra in India in A.D. 749. Three Tantric works *viz.*, *Ashṭa-tathāgata-stotra*, *Vajradhara-sangītā-bhagavat-stotra-ṭīkā* and *Hevajrodbhava kurukullāyāḥ* are ascribed to the authorship of one Śāntarakshita in Tibetan Bstan-hgyur,[27] which leads some scholars to identify him with the Śāntarakshita, the Mahāyānist logician, most of the Tibetan tradition centres round him as a pivot and who is revered in Tibet as Āchārya Bodhisattva. There is another trend of distinguishing him from the Vajrayānist Tantric author Śāntarakshita, who was connected with Padmasambhava. In the absence of further evidence, we are also not in a position to decide the sameness or not of the two.

The earlier part only of the career of Śāntarakshita falls in our period of survey. He is said to have died in Tibet in the later part of the eighth century A.D. He is still held with deep esteem in Tibet.

II. NOTICES OF BUDDHIST ACTIVITIES IN THE NON-BUDDHIST AND SECULAR LITERATURE

In the First Part of this chapter, the non-canonical or extra-canonical Buddhist texts of India have been listed and discussed under their respective authors. As they deal mainly with (Buddhist) Philosophy and Logic, we had an idea of the philosophical development during the period of our survey. We have duly made an attempt to narrate the life-story of their respective scholarly authors, who, because of their inborn apathy for mundane affairs, did no care at all to leave behind any worthwhile account of their personal life and notable events of their career. Naturally, we learn very little or virtually nothing about the contemporary society or the secular public opinion about the Buddhists or about the impact of Buddhism on the society. We would, therefore, explore different non-Buddhist or secular writings of the time to see if we get any idea about the activities of the Buddhists and their impact, if any, on the minds of the contemporary people, specially the non-Buddhists.

The Purāṇas

Though by nature the *Purāṇas* are religious texts of the Brāhmanical Hindus, they often provide us with various types of more or less important material which may be suitably utilised for the reconstruction of the history of ancient India, including that of the Classical Age. The *Purāṇas* in many of their sections and passages record not only past but also contemporary historical events, but we have to be extremely cautious in handling the Puranic material because of uncritical, careless and unhistorical approach of the authors of the *Purāṇas*, who were neither conversant with, nor did very much care to abide by, any code of historiography—even of a primitive type. Their compilations appear to have stretched over a few centuries in some cases covering our period of study. Anyway, the *Purāṇas* sometimes refer to the Buddha as well as his followers.

The *Vishṇu Puraṇā*, ascribed to the third or the fourth century A.D.,[28] however, makes very derogatory remarks about the Buddhists. While describing the heretical sects hostile to the teachings of the

Vedas, and the Vedic ways of life, it states that the *Raktāmbaras* ('the Red-mantled ones') meaning the Buddhists, are the worst of the evil-doers. It narrates the story of King Śatadhanus, who, as a consequence of his exchanging words with some heretics, had to be born again and again as despised animals and birds, until eventually he could be reborn as a king on the earth (Ch. 18)[29]

The *Bṛihannāradīya Purāṇa*, an *Upa-purāṇa* of an uncertain date of origin, expresses a strong feeling of hatred of the orthodox Hindus against the Buddhists. According to its injunction, hundred expiatory ceremonies are of no avail for a Brāhmaṇa entering a Buddhist temple, even though he does so in a great emergency; for, the Buddhists are the despisers of the *Vedas*.[30] It forbids the Brāhmaṇa even to look at a Buddhist. Such a strong anti-Buddhist feeling must have been generated at a time when the orthodox followers of the Brāhmanical faith apprehended of being swept away before a menacingly growing wave of swiftly spreading Buddhism.

But it is evident that by about the sixth century A.D. the everlasting rivalry between the Brāhmanical Hindus and the Buddhists had gradually been calmed down to a considerable degree, so much so that the people of the two religions overcame their natural enmity and began to be tolerant enough to respect each others, points of view and come closer and closer. Thus, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which appears to have been compiled in *circa* sixth century A.D., recognised the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishṇu along with Kapila, the founder of the *Sāṅkhya* system of philosophy. The *Bṛihaddharma Purāṇa*, an *Upa-purāṇa* of a later date, similarly makes the Buddha also an incarnation of Vishṇu besides Vālmikī and Vyāsa.

The Dramas

Ancient dramas, which were written and enacted, just like their modern counterparts, mainly for public entertainment, never cared for any historical ethics. Thus, even though they took historical themes as their subject-matter, they rarely narrated or highlighted historical events in a faithful manner. But in spite of such shortcomings we are often provided with a good deal of historical material in ancient

dramas, which, if critically handled, may yield valuable information for historical reconstruction. Moreover, the dramas reflect the trend of thought of the contemporary society, particularly of the type of people they deal with; and, naturally enough, we have in them glimpse into the prevailing condition of Buddhism. Ancient Sanskrit dramas, though generally written by orthodox Hindu authors, make a number of allusions and references to the Buddhists. We, thus, come across in some dramas certain Buddhist characters, which their authors introduced for various purposes—sometimes to embellish the plot, sometimes for sheer amusement and sometimes even to ridicule the Buddhists. There are, of course, a few instances where a pro-Buddhist or tolerant Hindu dramatist would present a great Buddhist character in order to uphold a high ideal before the society, revealing thereby the changing trend of popular thinking about the religion of the Buddha, which was based on the universal ideal of love and mercy.

Bhāsa. Placed at a period between Aśvaghosha and Kālidāsa,[31] Bhāsa, the great Sanskrit dramatist-poet wrote somewhat earlier than our period; but since he made some use of Buddhist characters in his dramas, specially in the celebrated *Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyana*, his ideas about the Buddhist activities have some relevance for our period as well. His last-mentioned drama introduces a fake Buddhist Śramaṇaka, *i.e.*, a monk, who plays an interesting role. His activities, though of a curious nature, show beyond doubt that Buddhist monks were held in great esteem and had unrestricted movements even into the inner apartment of a royal palace, which was out of bounds for any other outsider. For, Bhāsa's Śramaṇaka in question helps Yaugandharāyana, the minister of King Udayana of the Vatsa country, to rescue his master from the captivity of King Pradyota of Avanti. The work being difficult the rescue party took recourse to a secret measure by deploying the minister's colleague, Rumanvan by name, to resort to espionage in the garb of a Buddhist monk. But in another place in the same drama Bhāsa depicts the character of a sham Brāhmaṇa, who was mean enough to cry for a mere *modaka*. This attitude of Bhāsa, an eminent follower of the Brāhmanical faith,

clearly indicates that mendicants of the Buddhist community had a respectable place in the society, which eventually consisted of a major portion of Brāhmanical population. Some scholars even think that it was the Mahāyāna practice of installing images of great departed personages like that of the Buddha that induced Bhāsa to enact in his drama *Pratimā* the scene of installing the image of the deceased King Daśaratha in what appears to be the 'Family Portrait Gallery' of ancient days. But, contrarily enough, the same Bhāsa does not even hesitate to show that *all* of the adorners of the Buddhist yellow robe were not essentially genuine mendicants and real objects of veneration. For in Bhāsa's *Chārudatta* (*nāṭaka*) we come across a lascivious Brāhmana with the characteristic Buddhist name of 'Maitreya', who follows the evil practices of a Buddhist monk, who keeps awake at night to have secret meeting with a maid servant. Bhāsa thus gives us a glimpse into the life of ancient society, and, incidentally of the Buddhist community, which had as usual both the 'bright' and 'dark' sides.

Śūdaraka's Mṛichchhakaṭikā (nāṭaka) is based exactly on the same theme as that of Bhāsa's *Chārudatta* and even employs the same dramatis personae as we meet in the latter's play. But there is some difference of approach on the part of Śūdaraka. The *Samvāhaka* (the shampooer) who was a Hindu *Sanyāsī* in Bhasa's drama turns out to be a *Śākya Śramaṇa*, *i.e.*, Buddhist monk, in Śudaraka's *nāṭaka*. He is so staunch a moralist that he is reluctant even to touch the body of the heroine and help her in walking to a place of safety.[32] Then, again, it is interesting to note that the same drama indicates that the head of the Buddhist Monasteries were appointed by the rulers of the country, which indirectly means that 'the monasteries enjoyed royal patronage'.[33] The acceptance of the hetaira Vasantasenā as the wedded wife of the Brāhmaṇa Chārudatta is a highly remarkable phenomenon, and that reflects a tacit influence of Buddhism, which does away with any stigma that attaches itself with the caste system and the degraded social position of individuals. Curiously enough, the otherwise liberal and virtuous hero of the drama regards it inauspicious to see a Buddhist monk in a public place (Act IV), which

indicates his deep and inborn prejudice against the Buddhist community. Anyway, King Śūdaraka, the author of the *Mṛichchhakaṭikā* seems to have been well-versed in Buddhist tenets and had a great respect for Buddhists in general, as his song which sums up the Buddha's teaching would make us believe. However, this change of the attitude of the Hindus towards the Buddhist community and their sincere regard for all that is good in them is evidently due to gradual change in contemporary social outlook.

Kālidāsa who was a contemporary of the Gupta monarch Chandragupta II[34] as well as the famous Buddhist Logician Dignāga makes very little mention of the Buddhists in his dramatical works. It is only in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* that we come across a female ascetic whose designation *Parivrājikā* unmistakably presents her as a Buddhist nun. She is by nature a respectful woman, and is well-versed not in Sanskrit only but is also an expert musician and dancer, moving freely in high societies. But, curiously enough she takes upon herself the task of arranging the marriage of her friend's daughter with an old king, who already had two queens. The introduction of such a conspicuous character in the drama, specially depicted as a Buddhist nun, certainly does not do any justice to the Buddhist community, what to speak of the religious-mindedness of a nun, who is not supposed to take part in music and dancing, and, least of all, to act as a go-between in a marriage affair of an unfortunate type. According to some scholars, Kālidāsa purposely painted the Buddhist nun black[35] just to please his royal patron whose attitude towards Buddhism was apparently hostile. But such an attitude on the part of an Indian king of the period does not go well with the tradition of religious toleration.

Bhavabhūti. An uncontroversial successor of Kālidāsa as a dramatist, Bhavabhūti also in his *Mālati-Mādhava* introduces a Buddhist nun somewhat similar to that of the former's *Mālavikāgnimitra*. There the nun, Kāmandakī by name, brings about the union between Mālatī, her friend's daughter, and Mādhava, the latter's beloved—with the assistance of her two disciples, Avalokita and Buddharakshita. Kāmandakī, who has all the respect for the Buddha,

admits that she knowingly performs the un-Buddhistic match-making act, so strictly forbidden by the Buddha,[36] out of compassion for her friend's daughter, whom she wanted to get married with the one she holds most dear in life. This seemingly unethical act on the part of Kāmandakī might have been due to the impact of Mahāyāna Buddhism, for which *Karuṇā* or 'extreme compassion' is the keynote. As a scholar believes, in this matter "Bhavabhūti may be said to surpass him (Kālidāsa) in depicting sentiments, particularly Karuṇā (pathos or tenderness)".[37] However, that the *Mālatī-Mādhava* was written at a time when the esoteric Tantric rituals had come to open light is perhaps indicated by the manner in which another Buddhist nun, named Saudāminī, is shown to attain supernatural power through Yogic practices and human sacrifice to the Goddess Chāmuṇḍā.

King Harsha's drama, the *Nāgānanda*, is very much in tune with the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism of a more advanced stage; for, it not only propounds the ideal of *Karuṇā* but also that of extreme self-sacrifice for an unknown victim. It is by a sheer chance that Prince Jimūtavāhana was moved by the pathetic wailing of the mother of a Nāga (Serpent), who was, according to an agreed arrangement, being sent as the day's ration for Garuḍa, the king of the birds. Jimūtavāhana forced himself in the place of the luckless Nāga victim, and Garuḍa began to eat him, but the latter realised the mistake when the prince was half-eaten. Things took a happy turn when Goddess Gaurī, the consort of Śiva, who had a temple in the vicinity, appeared at the scene, restored Jimūtavāhana to life, who in his turn extorted the promise from Garuḍa that he would thenceforth spare the Serpent community. The very theme of the drama, *Nāgananda*, is of great interest, as it shows in a beautiful manner how the long standing antagonism between the Hindus and the Buddhists was being forgotten as circumstances gradually brought them nearer and nearer. For, here we come across a great Hindu monarch Harshavardhana, who, according to his own inscriptions, was a *Parama-Māheśvara* ('Supreme Devotee of Maheśvara-Śiva'), but ultimately leaned towards Buddhism, comes forward and writes a drama in order to extol the great Buddhist ideal of *Karuṇā* ('Mercy') in the form of *Ātmāhūti* ('self-sacrifice').

However, so far as the Hindu attitude towards Buddhism was concerned, the condition appears to be somewhat different in Southern India during the period of our study. This may be illustrated by a conspicuous and unique type of farce entitled *Mattavilāsa-prahasana*, attributed to the Pallava King Mahendravarman I (c. 600-630 A.D.), who was originally a Jaina but was later converted to Śaivism. The *Prahasana* intends to ridicule the follies of drunkenness to which both the Śaiva and Buddhist monks of the time succumbed. We first see a Śaiva ascetic who in an elated state of drunkenness praised Lord Śiva for introducing intoxicants, which create a feeling of salvation; but his companion, a Kapālin, who has a *kapāla* ('skull-bone') as his begging bowl, reminds him that the Jaina and the Buddha ascetics have a different means for salvation. The Kapālin then loses his begging bowl and accuses a Buddhist monk of stealing it, and would not believe that the one that the latter (the Buddhist monk) carries is not his, but a similar and different one. The Kapālin in his anger makes a disparaging statement about the Buddha by saying that the alleged thief is the disciple of such a person "who in his folly denies things that we see, the earth, the ocean, the mountain and so forth; how then are you not ready to deny such a small thing like a bowl?[38] Curiously enough, the Buddhist monk, who was apparently sick of the austerities of his life, deplores the Buddha's disciplinary injunction against the enjoyment of wine and women, and began to argue that the texts attributed to the Buddha which forbid all sorts of pleasure for monks cannot be authentic, for the Buddha, a highly rational person as he was, could not have written them; and he even says to have discovered authentic texts of the master's views which contradict the current ones forbidding earthly pleasures, and which he promises to expose for the benefit of the Buddhist community. He was, however, thankful to the Buddha for his injunction to shave the heads of monks, otherwise the drunk female companion of the Kapālin would have pulled him by his hair while she began to search him for the stolen skull-bowl. The scene then took a grim look when the Buddhist monk, out of compassion but with respect and gentleness, helps the fallen drunk female companion of the Kapālin to stand up by holding her hand. The Kapālin out of jealousy (and perhaps

drunkenness) mistakes this kindly action of the Buddhist monk and accuses him of the intention of taking her hand in marriage and thereby of violating the rights of a Brāhmaṇa, and prescribes punishments for his follies. However, the episode has a happy ending; and we see the Kapālin eventually apologising to the aggrieved Buddhist monk for wrongfully accusing him of the theft. Apart from the farcical aspect of the drama, it is quite evident from its contents that its author was quite well-versed with the teaching of the Buddha and the virtues and weaknesses of his followers.

In fine, all these secular and generally non-Buddhist literary works clearly show how the human mind, however, attached to the rigid codes of religious austerities, tries to free itself from the bondage of self-denial and hankers after all that is natural for a human being, precisely pleasure and earthly love. A conspicuous change takes place in Buddhist thinking in our period, and there is predominantly 'a lack of serious interest in the old tenets'; and in fact, the pessimistic ideal of Buddhism of the older days, which condemns the values of earthly existence in the form of pleasure is rarely entertained by its adherents. Of course, there was a remarkable and steady progress in the development of philosophical and logical studies, as we have already seen. But that field of serious thinking and research was taken up by a handful of religious teachers, academicians and thinkers, who formed a small minority of the vast Buddhist community of the period.

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5

Religion and Philosophy

The first split in the Buddhist church occurred a century after the demise of its founder, when it was divided into two sections or schools *viz.*, the Theravādins and the Mahāsāṅghikas. Thenceforward, the division went on increasing, giving rise to many sects, which counted to be no less than eighteen in number, during the time of Aśoka. The difference among the sects lay on major or minor doctrinal theories or disciplinary rules. Though all the eighteen schools were fundamentally Hīnayānists, the Mahāsāṅghikas, who were also known as Ācariyavādins and who were more liberal in the interpretation of the rules of discipline, introduced some new doctrines in a few of their sub-sects, which opened up the way for the advent of Mahāyāna. The course of change went on unperceptively for some time, when during the reign of Kaṇishka, it became so pronounced that the Buddhist church was divided into two broad sections, *viz.*, the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. This nomenclature was naturally innovated by the progressive section of the Buddhists who called their own system as Mahāyāna as against the Theravādins whom they called Hīnayānists. The difference lay in the conception of the ultimate goal. The ideal of Hīnayāna was Arhathood or personal enlightenment by one's own efforts; whereas the ideal of Mahāyāna was Bodhisattvahood, which aimed at universal enlightenment. It may not be out of place to discuss the salient features of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna.

As is mentioned above, the ideal of the Hīnayāna is Arhatship, *i.e.*, individual enlightenment. A man may attain this position by his own efforts and "does not share with others his hard-won knowledge

of the means for the attainment of Nirvāṇa. He believes that others too, driven by the stern reality of the miseries of the life, may some day take to the holy path, but does not bother to teach or enlighten them".[1]

The Hīnayānist view is that the realisation of *Pudgalanairātmya, i.e.*, the non-existence of a permanent entity like soul, would lead to *Nirvaṇā*. They believe in *Saṁsāra i.e.*, worldly existence and are frightened by its attendant miseries from which they seek release. As such, they think that when they realise the *Pudgala-sūdyatā*, they will be released from further rebirth and attain Nirvāṇa. Through meditational practices, they realised that one's own body is a store-house of impurities and this made them oblivious of their ownselves and taught them self-abnegation.

The Hīnayānists also realise that "the world or things around us are produced out of five Skandhas *having real existence*. The constituted things which originate through some causes and conditions (*Pratītvasamutpanna*) are in a constant state of flux and are devoid of any substance"[2]. . . It is by the removal of the notion of the existence of an *Ātman* as identical with one of the *Skandhas*, or something apart from them, that a person can attain *Nirvāṇa*. But he is unable to do so, because the Truth is hidden with a veil of passions like attachment, delusion and aversion, which is known as *Kleśūyaraṇa, i.e.*, veil of impurities which can be removed by realising *Pudgalanairātmya* or non-reality of a personal self. The Hīnayānists believe that the removal of *Kleśāvaraṇa* alone can pave the way to *Nirvāṇa*.

To the Hīnayānists, the Buddha was a human being endowed with supernatural powers and omniscience and because of the emphasis on his humanity the main concern of his disciples was to follow the eight-fold path prescribed by him. As such it is more intellectual and rational than devotional. In course of time, of course, the Buddha was endowed with super-human or super-divine powers and the conception of another eternal body, *i. e. Dharmakāya*, was accepted.

The Hīnayāna makes it imperative on its followers to become a monk. According to them, so long as one does not leave the household life and become a monk, one cannot attain *Nirvāṇa* or Emancipation, though there are a few instances of exception, they are very rare and some special reasons are mentioned therefor.

The Mahāyānist views are wide apart from those of the Hīnayānists. Firstly, their ideal is not Arhathood, but Bodhisattvahood, nay Buddhahood. According to them, the process of self-denegation by the Hīnayānists are wrong—the effacement of self could only be affected by dedicating one's own life, in his several existences, to the service of others. So he takes the vow of not having his own happiness, heavenly life, even *Nirvāṇa*—until and unless all other beings in the world are emancipated. This extreme altruism and principle of universal emancipation, is the key-note of Mahāyānism as against the policy of individual emancipation of the Hīnayānists, which the Mahāyānists criticise to be selfishness as all the efforts are centred around one's own self and call their method as *Hīna* or lower, which does not steer all beings to the end of sufferings.

According to the Mahāyāna principle, the first thing an aspirant for Bōddhisattvahood has to do is to take the vow of extreme self-sacrifice for the service of others—in other words, he has to develop the Bōdhichitta, *i. e.*, thought directed towards enlightenment, the resolve to embark on the career of a Bodhisattva. Any one who develops Bodhichitta is a Bodhisattva, a potential Buddha, a being destined to become a Buddha in the long run. For this one has not to become a recluse, he can be anybody from any walk of life—from the highest to the lowest rank in the society, even an animal—only he will have to be ready to practise extreme piety and friendliness to all beings by generosity and self-denial. When he develops the Bodhichitta this way, he has to attain six *Pāramitās* (perfection in virtues). These are : *Dāna* (charity or liberality), *Śīla* (moral precepts), *Kshānti* (forbearance), *Vīrya* (mental strength), *Dhyāna* (concentration of the mind) and *Prajñā* (knowledge of the truth)[8]—even in a number of lives, if it is not possible in one.

Unlike the Hīnayānists, the Mahāyānists do not admit the real existence of the *Skandhas* or elements composing a being or visible things. According to them, not only the composed things, but the components also, are equally unreal. The illusory conception of the Skandhas being real, are framed by the defective views due to ignorance. Unless the veil of ignorance (*Jñeyāvaraṇa*) is removed, the Truth, *i.e.*, the *Śūṇyatā*, *Tathatā* or *Dharma-nairātmya*, cannot be revealed. In other words, not only the *Kleśāvaraṇa*, but the *Jñeyāvaraṇa* also is to be removed; and not only *Pudgala-nairātmya* but *Dharma-nairātmya* also is to be realised. So the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* says that he who knows the *Dharma* as devoid of *Ātman* knows the Truth.[4]

About the body of the Buddha also, the Mahāyāna has a different view. According to them, the Buddha was not an ordinary human being. They propounded the theory of *Trikāya* or three bodies of the Buddha, *viz.*, the *Dharmakāya*, the *Rūpa* or *Nirmāṇakāya* and *Sambhoga-kāya*. The real body of the Buddha is the *Dharmakāyā i.e.*, the universal principle which has no form and is eternal and without appearance or disappearance. Occasionally, for the satisfaction of the highly advanced devotees, particularly Bōdhisattvas in the highest stages of sanctification, the Buddha assumed a refulgent and richly adorned form with all signs of great men. This body is called the *Sambhogakāya*. It is so called because it is shown as the special acquisition of the Buddha on account of merits accumulated in several lives. Generally for the guidance of common worldly men and beings, he assumes an earthly form which is subject to all human frailties. This is called the *Rūpakāya* or *Nirmāṇakāya*. The Mahāyānists tried to show that the Hīnayānists were wrong in their belief that Śākyamuni was really a man of flesh and blood and that relics of his body existed, but on the other hand they introduced the two conceptions of *Nirmāṇakāya* and *Buddha* or *Dharma-kāya*. Whatever is said to have been done by Śākyamuni is accounted for by the Mahāyānist texts as an apparent doings of a shadowy image created to follow the ways of the world (*Lokānuvartana*), in order to bring conviction to the hearts of the people that the attainment of Buddhahood was not an impossibility. There are such innumerable *Nirmāṇakāyas* of the

real Buddha. Gautama Buddha, according to the Mahāyānists, is one of them, being the *Nirmāṇa-kāya Buddha* of the *Sahālokadhātu.*[5]

This brief survey will show that the progressive section of the Buddhist church, *i.e.*, the Mahāsāṅghikas, developed changes and gradually formed a distinct group which claimed superiority over the Theravādins in all respects and named themselves as Mahāyānists in preference to the others, whom they named Hīnayānists, though the Theravādins were by no means abominable. These two sects again were subdivided into two each, the Hīnāyanists into Vaibhāshika and Sautrāntika; and the Mahāyānists into Mādhyamika and Yogāchāra.

The Vaibhāshikas

It is a well-known tradition that during the Buddhist Council held during the reign, and under the auspices, of Kaṇishka, the commentaries on Buddhist *Tripiṭakas* were written down. The abovementioned Vaibhāshikas are none other than a group of sects among the eighteen, headed by the Sarvāstivādins of Kashmir and Gandhara, who are so called because they reject the authority of the *Sūtras* altogether, only acknowledging the *Vibhāshās* or commentaries on the *Abhidharma*—particularly on the *Jñānaprasthāna Sūtra* of Kātyāyaṇīputra, which is the principal and evidently more authentic *Abhidharma* text of the Sarvāstivādins. They admit the real existence of the phenomenal world and the direct perception of exterior objects. 'In their dogmatical system, Śākyamuni is a common human being, who after attaining the qualified Nirvāṇa by his Buddhahood and final Nirvāṇa by his death, passed into Nothingness. What may be called divine in the Buddha, is his intuitive knowledge of the truth without the help of others'.[6] The Sarvāstivādins maintain that all the five *dharmas* exist in their subtlest forms at all times, whether past, present or future. They accept the fundamental creeds of Buddhism, *viz.*, *anattā*, *aniccā* of all worldly things; and their contentions are that 'things constituted out of the dharmas at a particular time are subject to disintegration, but not the dharmas themselves which always exist in their subtlest state', and that they do not exist always

and everywhere in the same form. In comparing the past and the future, they assert that the past and the future exist, but not in the same way as the present. The Vaibhāshikas include the Sarvāstivāda school comprising of a number of sects like (a) Mūla-sarvāstivāda, (b) Kāśyapiya (c) Mahīśāsaka, (d) Dharmaguptiya, (e) Bahuśrutiya, (f) Tāmrasāṭiya and (g) Vibhajyavādins and the Sāmmitiya comprising of: (h) Kurukullaka, (i) Avantīka and (j) Vātsīputrīya sects, the last of which is sometimes recognised as the same as the Sāmmitiya.

The *Vibhāshās* which were traditionally compiled during the Buddhist council during the time of Kaṇishka, were supposed to have been put into literary Sanskrit by Aśvaghosha. There are two versions of the *Vibhāshā*, one large in two hundred parts and another small in fourteen parts. Whether one is the abridged edition of the other is not easy to determine. According to Prof. Takakusu, 'the larger one belongs to the Kashmir School and the smaller one to the Gandhara school'. There were many well-known Vaibhāshika scholars, the most eminent of whom was Vasubandhu, who was a *Vaibhāshika* in his early life. The profundity of his scholarship can be judged from his work 'Abhidharmakosha' which, though not available in original Sanskrit, is available in Chinese translation; but the commentary written on it by his disciple (?) Yaśomitra is available in its Sanskrit original. There is a scholarly work on the *Vaibhāshika* philosophy by Saṅghabhadra named *Nyāyānusāra-śāstra* or *Koshakāraka-śāstra*, composed sometime around A.D. 489. About other *Vaibhāshika* teachers, mention has already been made in the chapter on Buddhist scholars. It may not be out of place to mention here that a separate sect named 'Kusa' was formed in Japan, based on its philosophy.

The Sautrāntika School

The Sautrāntika school also flourished in Gandhara and derived the name due to their staunch belief in the *Sūtras* or *Sūtrāntas* (Pali, *Suttanta*) *i.e.*, the original texts, as the sole authority as against the Vaibhāshikas. They did not have any faith—not only in the *Vibhāshā* or commentaries, but also in the *Abhidharma* text itself. As such, these two schools were bitterly against each other. This school is also known as *Vinayavādi*, as well as *Dārshṭāntika*, for their adherence to the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and as they tried to prove their treatise by exam-

ples (*dṛishṭānta*). The Sautrāntikas also consist of two schools, *viz.*, (A) the Mahāsāṅghika school comprising of (a) Pūrva-śaila, (b) Apara-śaila, (c) Haimavata, (d) Lokottaravādin and (e) Prajñaptivādin; and (B) the Sthavira-Theravādin school, consisting of (f) Mahāvihāra, (g) Jetavanīya and (h) Abhayagirinivāsin. Though all the sects belonged to the Hīnayāna, some of them particularly the Mahāsāṅghikas, joined the Mahāyāna in a latter period.

The philosophical principles of this Sautrāntika school are said to have been formulated by the renowned teacher Kumāralabdha of Takshaśilā, who was mentioned by Hiuen-Tsang as one of the 'four suns of India'—the three others being Aśvaghosha, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva. The name of another sage Dharmottara or Uttaradharma of Kashmir is also mentioned as the founder of this school.

As against the Vaibhāshikas who held the existence of phenomenal objects on direct perception, this school asserted that the external objects were mere appearances (*prajñapti*) and their existence could be proved only by inference (*bāhyārthānumeya*). 'The existence of intellection implies the existence of the truth (Jñeya) to be realised'. According to this school, there is 'no substance (anātma), no duration (anitya), and no bliss (duḥkha), except Nirvāṇa (sukha).[7] It admitted the transference of the subtlest form of elements from one existence to another, but asserted that they cease to exist in *Nirvāṇa*.[8]

As is mentioned above, this Sautrāntika school had a bend towards Mahāyānism, and may therefore, be regarded as being in the transition stage towards Mahāyāna. The main source of information for the doctrines of the Lokottaravādins is the *Mahāvastu* which is called the *Vinaya Piṭaka* of the Lokottaravādins. Though the doctrines are mainly Hīnayānist, the Mahāyāna features like the deification of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas may well be detected in them. 'Their Buddha is possessed of the Ten powers (daśa balāni), the Four Vaiśāradyas, three Smṛtyupasthānas and an all-pervasive compassion' like the Hīnayānist, but, at the same time, they say that 'Buddhas appear at the same time in more than one world, they are omniscient and know all the Dharmas at the same time, exist in all corners of the world. They ascribe a Dharmakāya and a Sambhogakāya to him'.[9]

A great exponent of this school was said to be one Śrīlābha or Śrīlabdha, an inhabitant of Kashmir, who wrote *Vibhāshāśāstra* of the Sautrāntika school. Hiuen-Tsang saw in Ayodhya a monastery where Srilābha is said to have stayed for some time. The 'Jojitsu School' of Japan is said to have been derived from the Satyasiddhi school of a certain Harivarman, which claims to be the source of the Sautrāntika school. But due to the paucity of evidence, it is difficult to say if the Satyasiddhi school ever existed in India at all.

The schools of Hīnayāna are known as realistic as against those of Mahāyāna which are called idealistic. The reason behind this is that the Hīnayānists believe in the reality of the *dharmas*, while the Mahāyānists believe in the ideal of *Śūṇyatā* and *Vijñaptimātratā* or *Ālayavijñāna*, *i. e.*, the Knowledge of the Truth. We shall discuss this point in detail at the proper place.

The Mahāyāna, like the Hīnayāna, also was divided into two schools, *viz.*, the Mādhyamika and Yogāchāra. But before we discuss these two schools in detail, we would like to trace the sources of the Mahāyāna philosophy and Mahāyāna literature.

The Mahāyāna is not one unified sect and as such does not have a separate canon of its own. But the philosophy of the Mahāyāna is incorporated in nine texts which are also known as *Vaipulya Sūtras.* These nine texts are: (1) *Ashṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (2) *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, (3) *Lalita-vistara*, (4) *Laṅkāvatāra*, (5) *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa*, (6) *Gaṇḍavyūha* (7) *Tathāgata-guhyaka* or *Tathāgataguṇajñana*, (8) *Samādhirāja* and (9) *Daśabhūmika*. These texts were compiled at different periods and belonged to different sects, but ultimately they came to be recognised as important Mahāyāna texts, or '*Nine Dharmas*', which might mean *Dharma paryāya* or religious texts. In course of time, these works were so much venerated that instead of studying them, they began to be treated as objects of worship, a 'bibliolatry' which is still prevalent in Nepal and some other places. The glorification and efficacy of the worship of the texts are inlaid in the texts themselves. This bulky literature being known as *Sūtras* is claimed to be the teachings of the

Buddha himself, but the validity of the statement needs a thorough estimation, for which this is not the proper occasion.

According to T. Stcherbatsky, the most important Mahāyāna *Sūtra* is the *Prajñā-pāramitā*, though according to Winternitz, it is the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*. But he also admits that the 'Prajñā-pāramitās are rather in the nature of philosophical treatise'. The meaning of *Prajñā pāramitā* is 'Transcendent wisdom' or 'wisdom perfection.' According to the Mahāyāna doctrines, a Bodhisattva is to acquire six *Pāramitās*, of which *Prajñā* or Supreme knowledge, *i.e.*, the knowledge of *Śūnya*, is the most important. (This has been discussed earlier). The *Prajñā-Pāramitā Sūtra* is one of the earliest of the Mahāyāna *Sūtras*, this is testified by the internal literary evidence also.[10] The popularity and importance of the *Prajñā-pāramitā* is proved by the numerous recensions of this text which vary from as many as one hundred and twenty-five thousand *slokas* or verses down to the 'Prajñāpāramitā of very few syllables' (*svalpākshari Prajñā-pāramitā*) and of even one syllable' (*ekākṣarī*) and at last *Dhāranī* or magic spell. Not only the text itself was worshipped, but ultimately it took the anthropomorphic form of a goddess and began to be worshipped with great reverence as goddess *par excellence* of knowledge, when Mahāyānism developed into full-fledged Vajrayāna. Naturally, it took a thousand years to form this development, during which period it continued to be held with unwavered reverence. Many a great philosophers like Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, *etc.*, wrote voluminous commentaries on it, which have come down to us in Chinese and Tibetan translations. There are contradictory views about the profundity of the text, but those might be just 'views which crop up in the history of philosophy'. 'Nevertheless it is very difficult for us to imagine that the immense sanctity which is attributed to those texts can really be due to a valuation and an understanding of the metaphysical doctrines which they propound. It is more probable that it is precisely the dark and incomprehensible element in the doctrines taught by these texts, which has contributed to make them sacred. *Omne obscurum pro magnifico*.'[11]

All scholars of Buddhism, particularly those who claim to un-

derstand the abstruse philosophy of the *Prajñāpāramitās*, might not agree to the above remark by Winternitz, but there is no denying the fact that the philosophy dealt in the Prajñā-pāramitā, is really very deep and complicated and not easily comprehended by a less trained mind.

Most of the scholars agree that of all the recensions of the *Prajñāpāramitā* the *Ashṭasāhasrikā* is the earliest one, the additions and abridgements being of later phase. In fact, the *Prajñā-pāramitās* are by nature both religion and philosophy at the same time.

It was not before a considerable period after the growth of Mahāyāna that it was also divided into two schools, *viz.*, Mādhyamika and Yogāchāra.

The Mādhyamika School :

The Mādhyamika school of Buddhist philosophy owes its origin to Nāgārjuna, the author of *Mūla-Mādhyamaka kārikā*. The name Mādhyamika was derived from *Madhyama* or the middle. The *Mādhyamika* philosophy was so called because it avoided two extremes, *i.e.*, it advocated neither the theory of absolute reality nor that of total unreality—of the world—but chose a middle path, inculcating that the world has only a conditional existence. This system has a strong affinity with the middle path of the primitive Buddhism and as such can be recognised as more orthodox. The entire *Mādhyamika* philosophy moves round *Śūṇyatā*, as its pivot, from which it has acquired the general name of Sunyavāda *i.e.*, the philosophy that asserts *Śūṇya* as the characterisation of Reality. The text establishes that the only Reality is *Śūṇyatā* and *Śūṇyatā* can never be described. 'The phenomenal world is a misconceived superimposition on the Reality and hence there is absolutely no difference between the phenomenal world (Saṁsāra) and the Reality (Śūṇyatā or Nirvāṇa)'.[12]

According to the Mādhyamikas, 'the doctrine of the Buddha rests on two truths; one, conventional truth in which the deeper meaning remains hidden (Samvṛti satya) and the other, truth in the highest sense (Paramārtha satya). He who does not understand the distinction between these two truths, does not understand the pro-

found substance of the Buddha-doctrine. The highest truth can be taught only when based on the truth of everyday life and without the assistance of the highest truth, it is not possible to understand Nirvāṇa.'[13]

Śūnyatā has been translated by some scholars as 'Nihilism' or as *Nāstikatā* by scholars of the past as well as present. H. Kern, the well-known exponent of Buddhism also calls the Mādhyamikas as complete nihilists.[14] But this view had been strongly refuted long back by Chandrakīrti, who wrote a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mādhyamika-kārikā*, entitled *Prasannapadā*. (cf. *Mādhyamika Vṛtti*, p. 368).

Śūnyata has been equated with *Nirvāṇa* and its another synonym is *Tathatā* . According to T.R.V. Murti, 'Śūṇyatā is negative only for thought, but in itself it is the non-relational knowledge of the Absolute. It may even be taken as more universal and positive than affirmation.'[15]

In the *Mādhyamika-kārikā* we also come across statements like "Śūṇyatā was declared by the Buddha for dispensing with all views or 'isms'. Those who convert Śūṇyatā itself into another 'ism', are verily beyond hope or help."[16]

Elsewhere the Buddha is said to have remarked that *Śūnyatā* is to be treated like a ladder for mounting up to the roof of *Prajñā*. Once the roof is reached, the latter should be discarded.[17]

Nāgārjuna, who introduced the Mādhyamika school was succeeded by a train of disciples like Āryadeva, Mātṛcheṭa, Rāhulachandra, Saṅgharakshita, Buddhapālita and Bhāvaviveka or Bhavya, who carried his banner of Mādhyamika philosophy high. Nāgārjuna used to take recourse to the *Prāsaṅgika* method (or *reductio-ad-absurdum*, which means proving a proposition by proving the falsity of its contradictory) of argumentation, which was also followed by some of his descendant disciples. It was Bhāvaviveka who discarded the Prāsaṅgika method and adopted a new method called Svātantrika or direct reasoning. And it was during the time of Bhāvaviveka that a split occurred between the Mādhyamikas and the Yogāchārins and

the Yogāchāras became finally and completely separated from the Mādhyamikas to form a new independent school.

The Yogāchāra School :

The accredited founder of the Yogāchāra school is Maitreyanātha, the teacher of Asaṅga. Sometimes confusion is created by some scholars who identify the teacher Maitreyanātha with Maitreya, the future Buddha, and claim that the real founder of the Yogāchāra school is Asaṅga, to whom the Yogāchāra philosophy was revealed by his teacher Maitreya in the Tushita heaven. Both the Mādhyamika and Yogāchāra philosophies are characteristically idealistic as against the realism of the Hīnayāna. Like the Mādhyamika, the Yogāchāra also establishes that *Śūṇyatā* is the only Reality, which is without origin and decay and is beyond all descriptions. The difference lay in the fact that the Yogāchāra maintained that the external objects are unreal, but the reality of our cognition could not be denied.

This school teaches *Vijñānavāda*, *i.e.*, nothing exists outside consciousness. The sole Absolute, which embraces this consciousness, which, in its turn, includes in itself all psychic process (*Ālaya vijñāna*, *i.e.*, the basis or storehouse of consciousness), is *Bodhi*, the one and the only truth. It is *one*, but revealed in the endless multiplicity of the Buddhas. This *Bodhi* is attainable to the Yogācārins, *i.e.*, those who practise *Yoga*. (The term *Yogāchāra* is a compound of *Yoga* and *Āchāra*, meaning the practice of *Yoga*). For attaining this *Bodhi*, an aspirant has to pass through ten stages (*Daśabhūmi*) of the career of a Bodhisattva. These stages are dealt in detail in the texts like *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, *Yogāchārabhūmi Śāstra* or *Saptadaśabhūmi Śāstra*, of which only a portion, the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, has come down in Sanskrit. The *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* or the Bodhisattva stage, is the fifteenth one of the seventeen steps prescribed in the *Saptadaśabhūmi Śāstra*. The last one, *i.e.*, the seventeenth, being the 'last, in which no trace of Karman is left'.

Takakusu quotes the theory of Stcherbatsky that *Mahāyāna Ālayavijñāna* and *Tathatā* arose, and admitted by Aśvaghosha, in the first century A.D., in the *Mahāyāna Śraddhotpāda Sūtra*, which

theory is not generally accepted.[18] A few scholars regard the *Pañcaviṁśati-sāhasrikā Prajñā-Pāramitā* as the earliest treatise on Yogāchāra, on which the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-kārikā* or *Prajñapāramitopadeśa Śāstra* by Maitreya, was later on added as a prefix. This was followed by the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* and the *Kāśyapaparivarta*.

The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, another of the nine *Vaipulya Sūtras*, teaches principally a modification of the *Śūnyavāda*, the *Vijñānavāda*, in all its parts and coincides with the doctrines of Maitreya Asaṅga and the *Mahāyāna Śraddhotpāda Sūtra*. The Yogāchāra school was divided into: the 'ancient one' or the followers of Maitreya and Asaṅga and the 'new one' or the followers of Dignāga. Asaṅga himself composed a Mahāyāna *Abhidharma*, the *Abhidharma-samuchchaya*, in which he deals with the *Dharmas* in detail. In the system of Dignāga, the old Abhidharma is discarded altogether and replaced by Logic and Epistemology. Some analogy of the Yogāchāra system with the Brahmanical *Sāṁkhya* system has been traced by some scholars.

The characteristic features of the period under review are that the Hīnayāna was gradually receding into background, while the Mahāyāna was in the growing ascendency. A few schools of the Hīnayāna, of course, were quite prominent and enthusiastic. But the general tendency of this age seems not for further propagation of doctrines and thereby creating different new sub-sects,—but a greater amount of diversion of the attention of the people towards academic pursuits. The monasteries were transformed into great academic centres and the monks there busied themselves into literary activities, producing magnificent works, which have come down to the posterity as invaluable assets. In a somewhat later period, the art of dialectics became very popular and it became the fashion of the day to defeat opponents in argumentation and, if the opponents belonged to different sects, the defeated one had to embrace the religion of the victor. If there could not be direct confrontation, they refuted each other's views through writings. Even scholars dead and past were not given respite. This scholarly zeal produced a number of excellent works of Indian Exegetics and philosophy by many a distinguished scholars,

which have enriched the treasury of Indian literature to a great extent, though most of them have not come down to us in Indian original.

The Emergence of Vajrayāna

Mahāyānism gradually culminated into the Vajrayāna, which is more commonly known as Tantrism. As is always the case, the change occurred in the conception of *Nirvāṇa*. To the Mādhyamikas, *Nirvāṇa* is nothing but *Śūṇya* which meant a condition which is 'neither existent, nor non-existent, neither a combination of the two, nor a negation of the two.' This transcendental condition, which is more difficult to comprehend than the mystic silence of the Buddha, perplexed even the most intellectual of scholars. The '*Śūṇya*' of the Yogāchāra, on the other hand, is a positive one with a positive element of *Vijñāna*, which is not unconceivable. The Yogāchāra theory of *Vijñānavāda* also became obsolete and a new idea named '*Mahāsukhavāda*' of the Vajrayānists emerged. *Nirvāṇa* went on to be conceived as '*Śūṇya*', '*Vijñāna*', '*Mahāsukha*'—or even a combination of all the three ideas, *viz.*, those of Mādhyamika, Yogāchāra and Vajrayāna. The *Vajra* of the Vajrayānā or adamantine way is described as 'unchangeable, unpierceable, impenetrable, incombustible and indestructible'.

As is well-known, the tendency of the Mahāyāna was to bring the religion closer to the people and in an easier way. To the common people, religion means something full of rituals, ceremonies and also some esoteric practices. 'Religious tendency is always to move from abstract to concrete'. The Mahāyānic ideas of *Śūṇyatā*, *Prajñāpāramitā*, *etc.*, also took shape in the form of god or goddess, bringing in their trail a host of other divinities, most of which were nothing but the concrete forms of different ideas. For this reason, *Mantras* (spells), *Mudrās* (poses of the hand), *Maṇḍalas* (mystic circles) were introduced into Buddhism and a number of philosophical texts explaining the origin, significance and function of all these were also written, thus forming another class of literature. Though the *Mantras*, *etc.*, were introduced in the beginning for the realisa-

tion of the ultimate Truth, gradually they changed their colour and air to be transformed into Tantrism.

The earliest and most important texts dealing with Tantric Buddhism are the *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* and the *Śrī Guhyasamāja Tantra.*[19] The *Tathāgata Guhya Sūtra*, which is ascribed to the authority of no less a personality than the great philosopher Asaṅga and is quoted in Śāntideva's *Śikshāsamuchchaya*, is considered by Winternitz as a separate text from the *Śrī Guhyasamāja Tantra*. This view, of course, is not accepted by many scholars.[20] *The Mañjuśrī Mūlakalpa* gives an exposition of various *mudrās* (poses of hand), *maṇḍalas* (mystic circles) *Kriyās* (rites) and *Charyās* (priestly duties). It also teaches that observance of certain rites like *Śīla*, *Vrata*, *Śauchāchāra*, *Homa*, *Japa* and *Dhyāna*, *i.e.*, observance of moral precepts, austerities, cleanliness, meditation and uttering of *mantras*, *etc.*, would lead an aspirant to success. This text provides directions for drawing pictures of different gods and goddesses as well as their position within different *maṇḍalas*. It further gives the formula of the rites and ceremonies for worshipping these deities or for propitiating evil spirits. The *Guhyasamāja*, on the other hand, is devoted mainly to *Yoga* and *Anuttara Yoga*. Though it contains a few *mantras* and *maṇḍalas*, its main purpose is to explain the secret of Tathāgata, *i.e.*, 'the unknowable reality, the source of all Tathāgatas, as also of the phenomenal world and how to realise it. The knowledge is very deep and as such 'the secret of all secrets.' According to this text, the Truth is *Vajra* or oneness of the universe, where there is no distinction between a man and a woman or between the things of the world. The Bodhisattvas are instructed to develop their body, speech and thought in such a way that they may become *Vajra*, *i.e.*, remain unaffected by worldly affairs. In this text *Chitta* developed into the *Citta-vajra* stage is identified with Bodhichitta, which is, of course, different from the Bodhichitta of the earlier Mahāyānic conception. The *Bodhichitta* or *Chittavajra* of this text means the realisation of the unity, the non-duality of the Truth and the universe.[21]

The Vajrayāna is also known as the Tantrayāna. The *Tantras* are claimed to be a branch of science which deal with psychic matters. In

the *Tantra* texts directions are given for a variety of psychic exercises which need competent teachers as well as eligible students. As such, it is not open to all, but is restricted only to those who are initiated into the mysteries of the science and are capable of following the intricate practices with energy and patience. Detailed discussions on the qualities of prospective preceptors and recipients are made in different Tantric texts, in which emphasis is laid on the novice being sincere, patient, devoted and ready to follow the preceptor with ungrudging devotion, without which it is not possible to proceed in the path of *Sādhanā* or religious practices, which are to be done only for the benefit of all beings. It is very deep and abstruse and as such a strict secrecy is to be observed for the practices.

As we have seen above some tradition imposes the responsibility of the introduction of Tantrism to Asaṅga, who is said to have imbibed it from his teacher Maitreya in the Tushita heaven. Some scholars, again, try to find out traces of Tantric practices in his *Mahāyāna-Sutrālaṅkra*.[22] The *mantras* and rituals are inseparably connected with the *Tantras*. It is not known when and how the *mantra* element was introduced into Buddhism, but there is no denying the fact that in spite of the Buddha's utter distaste for it, he seems to have had to prescribe some kind of utterance of *Mantras* and spells to avert evil, as is found in the earliest Buddhist texts, *viz.*, the Pali canon.[23] It is further claimed by later Tantric teachers that Tantrism was taught by the Buddha himself for a certain group of his disciples, who were not capable of practising the strictly ethical and meditational religion preached by him, but at the same time, were willing to attain some worldly gains. As such, it was strictly secret and was handed down from teacher to disciple orally in an unbroken chain, for a long time, and the group of people who practised these rituals, formed a sort of society, which was named as *Guhyasamāja* or Secret Society. It is further claimed that during the early fourth century A.D., *i.e.*, which is precisely the time of Asaṅga, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, or the Text which deals with the Tantric practices and serves as a manual of Tantrism, was written down. But still it was not made public, as 'the public mind was not yet prepared to

receive the revolutionary innovations introduced in it'. It was only about the eighth century A.D. that it was felt to be no more necessary to maintain secrecy and was made public through the writings of the contemporary religious teachers. Apparently, it is highly incompatible with the strictly moral and refined nature of the Buddha to have introduced such kind of practices; and even if we accept that he had introduced some kind of rituals for the benefit of his disciples, they were definitely not like the elaborate rituals as is prescribed by the Tantric Buddhists. With the gradual change in the religion and philosophy of the Buddha those few minor rituals must also have been incorporated into the mass of complicated rituals as we find in later Tantric works.

Buddhist iconography, which long ago assumed a characteristic form, gradually developed into a full-fledged system during this period. The abstract philosophical ideas as well as religious texts like the *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* took concrete shape in the idea of godheads, which went on multiplying with the innovation of different gods and goddesses. Whereas in the Mahāyāna period there were images of the Buddha and a few Bodhisattvas only, they became numerous due to Tantric influence.

It is mentioned above that the Mahāyāna ideas of *Śūṇyatā* became a synonym of *Vajra* in the Vajrayāna. As in the Mahāyāna, not only the realisation of *Śūṇyatā* is necessary for the devotees, but a lot of stress is given on *Karuṇā* or universal compassion; the Vajrayānists also lay great emphasis on *Karuṇā* and all their activities are tinged with the colour of compassion for the whole universe; everything done are for the purpose of saving the world from miseries. Their theology is also based on the different aspects and emanations of *Śūṇyatā* and *Karuṇā*. The ultimate principle of the unity of the universe is defined as the Vajrasattva, who is the 'Being' of adamantine substance and is supposed to be the unity and identity of *Śūṇyatā* and pure consciousness. Thus Vajrasattva is virtually conceived as a personal god, the Lord Supreme which finally combines the theories of the Mādhyamika and the Yogāchāra Schools. Though the Vajrasattva is mentioned as 'free from all existence and non-existence' at the same

time, 'he is endowed with the potency of all forms and existences and is himself the embodiment of loveliness'. The Vajrasattva is also known as the Ādi-Buddha or the originator of all the Buddhas.

The Vajrayāna pantheon starts with the conception of the image of Vajrasattva or Ādi-Buddha which is again supposed to be the complete unity of the two abstract ideas of *Śūṇyatā* and *Karuṇā*, sometimes in male and female forms. It is also said that when the Bodhichitta, *i.e.*, the individual soul is united with the *Śūṇyatā* or the universal soul, 'in the state of highest meditation and concentration', the image of the deity is perceived by the devotee. The attributes of the Ādi-Buddha are five kinds of knowledge from which proceed five kinds of meditation (*dhyāna*), which gives rise, in its turn, to the idea of five 'Dhyānī Buddhas', who preside over the five *Skandhas* or the five elements which compose the world. These five Dhyānī Buddhas are : (i) Vairochana, presiding over the *Rūpa-skandha*, (ii) Ratnasambhava, presiding over *Vedanā*, (iii) Amitābha, presiding over *Saṁjñā*, (iv) Amoghasiddhi, presiding over *Saṁskāra* and (v) Akshobhya, presiding over *Vijñāna*. They are also the presiding deities of the five directions, *viz.*, the four cardinal points and the centre. Each of them are assigned a Bodhisattva, a Śakti or female principle, a colour, a *Kula* or family, a human Buddha, a *mudrā* or posture, a *Vāhana* or mount and such other things. The five Dhyānī Buddhas are also called five Tathāgatas. Whether in plastic form or in painting, the Dhyānī Buddhas are always depicted on the crest of their respective Bodhisattvas and the Śaktis or female energies, who subsequently became independent goddesses. Later on, when the pantheon enlarged to a great extent, each of the new god or goddess was put under one or the other Dhyānī Buddha, who was depicted mostly in the crest or overhead, a fact which helps a great deal to specifically identify individual images, whose overwhelmingly large number would have otherwise baffled all means of successful identification.

Śūṇyatā and *Karuṇā* are sometimes called as *Prajñā* and *Upāya* also. *Śūṇyatā* is *Prajñā* or perfect knowledge or a static or negative

state of mind which separates the individual from the world of suffering beings: *Karuṇā*, on the other hand, being the dynamic force and the emotion of deep compassion and the inspiration, which motivates a person to benevolent activities, is called *Upāya*.[24] They are often depicted in sculptures or paintings in deep embrace, as if merged into one. This non-dual state is explained as the extreme bliss of *Nirvāṇa* and this conception gives rise to the theory of *Mahāsukhavāda*, which is an important aspect of Vajrayāna Buddhism.[25]

The dates and authorships of *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* and the *Śrī Guhyasamāja Tantra* are not known, but it is confirmed that both these texts existed during the fourth-fifth centuries A.D., and the *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* might be an earlier composition. But while these dates are uncertain, certainty lies with some texts which are ascribed to a later period, when Tantrism got its foothold in the soil of Bengal. Of these texts, mention may be made of *Jñānasiddhi*, whose author Indrabhūti was a king of Uḍḍiyāna, a place famous as one of the four great centres of Tantrism in India. He was a great Tantric teacher and the father of Padmasambhava, who founded Lamaism in Tibet and is held in great esteem by the Tibetans even to-day. The *Jñānasiddhi* teaches that 'all the causes of our worldly attachments, *viz.*, the objects of the organs of senses, are in reality emanations of the Buddhas, who are in turn, emanations of the Buddha Vairochana, *i.e.*, the Ādi Buddha. In other words, the universe represents the variety of the unity, the Ādi Buddha.[26] Another text called *Guhyasiddhi*, which is ascribed to the authorship of Padmavajra, a contemporary of Indrabhūti, has come down to us in Sanskrit original, in which all the secret rites of Vajrayāna are described and recommended.

An important aspect of Tantrism is the innovation of *Dhāraṇīs* or magic charms, which having its beginning in a much earlier period, became very prominent during these days and in subsequent period and gave rise to a bulk of literature. In fact, once the portal of Buddhism was flung open to let in some elements of Tantrism, all the corollary aspects in the form of magic, charms, sorceries *etc.*, with the help of

Dhāraṇīs, *mantras* and such other things flowed on torrentially into it and quickly changed the ethico-religious outlook of Buddhism.[27]

But a separate line of philosophy also grew up along with this Tantrism almost simultaneously which did not recommend any of these outward rituals. This is the philosophy of the Sahajiyās, which came to be known subsequently as Sahajayāna. It is a novel monistic doctrine, which refutes asceticism, ceremonies and the worship of images and recommends only meditation on one's own body, which is said to be the abode of all the gods. Lakshmiṅkarā, the sister of Indrabhūti (c. 687-717 A.D.) mentioned above, was a well-known Sahajiyā saint, who is attributed to the authorship of the text known *Advayasiddhi*.

Our period of survey heralded a great upsurge of Tantric Buddhism which became very prominent during the Pala regime. Both Buddhist and Brahmanic *Tantras* became very prominent in this period, having lots of similarity and mutual borrowings—both in rituals and the conception of a godhead. This accounts for the gradual merging of Buddhism into Brahmanism, which is generally misunderstood as the disappearance of Buddhism from its native soil.

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1. Cf. Stcherbatsky, *Concept of Buddhist Nirvāṇa*, p. 30.
2. Cf. N. Dutt, *Aspects*, p. 132.
3. C. Bendall (Ed.), *Śikshasmuchchaya*, p. 187.
4. *Saddarmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, Bibl Budh.*, p. 138.
5. *The Classical Age* (Ed. R.C. Majumdar), p. 374.
6. H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*. p. 126.
7. J. Takakusa, *Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 66.
8. Cf. *The Classical Age*, p. 380.
9. Cf. H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 126.
10. For detailed discussion vide Winternitz, *HIL* II, pp. 295 ff.
11. For detailed discussion vide Winternitz, HIL II, p. 324.
12. Cf. *The Classical Age*, p. 380.
13. M. Winternitz, *HIL*, p. 346.

14. H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 126.
15. *CPB* p. 167.
16. Mādhyamika Kārikā 13, 8.
17. Stcherbatsky, *Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa*, p. 43.
18. Cf. The Classical Age p. 384.
19. *GOS*, Ed. B. Bhattacharyya, No. 53.
20. For details cf. M. Winternitz, HIL, II p. also S.B. Dasgupta, Intr. to Tantric Buddhism, p. 46.
21. Cf. *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, 137.
22. Cf. S.B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, pp. 17-20.
23. Cf. *Mettā* and *Āṭanāṭiya Sūttas of Pali Canon.* (*khudadaka Nikāya and Dīgha Nikāya*).
24. Cf. *Prajñopāya-viniśchaya Siddhi*, G.O.S. 44 Ed. B. Bhattacharya.
25. Cf. S.B. Dasgupta, Introduction to Tantric Buddhism, p. 148.
26. The Age of Imperial Kanauj, (Ed. R.C. Majumdar), p. 266.
27. Cf. S.B. Dasgupta, Introduction to Tantric Buddhism, p. 70.

6

Conclusion

A perusal of the previous chapters will bring to the mind a clear picture of the condition of Buddhism prevalent in India during some three hundred and fifty years from the fourth century to about the middle of the seventh century A.D., *i.e.*, the Pre-Pāla Classical Age. This period is one of the most outstanding epochs both from the standpoint of political history and from that of Buddhism. The collective evidence of inscriptions, art, architecture and literature as well as that of the records of the Chinese travellers, lead us to the conclusion that Buddhism during this period became quite popular in the country and was not only well-established but also at the peak of its glory. Many scholars have observed a sort of tilt of Buddhism towards decadence, but a critical study reveals that what is supposed to be decadence is nothing but a natural change in its evolutionary trend. Dynamism or progress is the sign of life and all things of the world undergo substantial change in the course of their respective progressive evolutions. Buddhism was no exception to this rule. Buddhism may very well be compared to a growing Banyan plant. From a small insignificant seedlings, it grows to a huge tree, raising its head very high into the sky, and spreads its good many branches of thick foliage over a vast area, providing shady shelter to animals and human beings from the sun and rain as well as allowing winged creatures to build nests for their living. Not only the main underground roots traverse long distances in various directions but also descending upper roots from most branches cover a wide area above the ground and give rise to a

number of somewhat apparently disconnected trees. Similarly, Buddhism also moved a long way from its pristine condition and spread into the whole country and abroad, giving rise to numerous branches and sub-sects. Then as it multiplied its branches, it brought solace and peace to people of various other countries afflicted with the miseries of the world.

The Chinese pilgrims saw thousands of monasteries and numerous monks all over India though some important places connected with the life of the Buddha, like Kapilāvastu, Vaiśālī, Śrāvastī, *etc.*, were almost deserted. But the reason of this cessation may not always be due to the decline of the religion; it was sometimes due to the shifting of political or economic centres, or to some natural causes like famine or pestilence, which made it impossible for the monks and lay people to continue to run their establishments and live there.

During the period of our study the demarcation line between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna was growing wider and wider as the days passed by; and with the growing popularity of Mahāyāna, Hīnayāna was gradually receding into the background. While Mahāyāna was moving from the north towards the east, Hīnayāna was being cornered into the frontier countries like Kashmir, Gandhara, Afghanistan, *etc.*, where the Sarvāstivādins were quite prominent. Sometimes there was bitter antagonism among the followers of the two schools and as a consequence their monasteries were often separated. But in small areas, particularly in smaller places, the followers of the two schools lived in peaceful co-existence.

The popularity of Mahāyāna was due partly to the doctrine it preached and partly to the active propaganda which eminent teachers of this period did for it. It had cast its influence on Hīnayāna itself, as is evident from some Hinayâna texts. The supposedly Hīnayāna works like the *Jatākamālā*, the *Mahāvastu*, the *Lalitavistara* and the *Divyāvadāna*—all biographies of the Buddha—show clear signs of the Mahāyāna influence. The secret of this popularity is not far to seek.

In Hīnayāna the highest stage to be attained by an aspirant for salvation was 'Arhathood' and that too was only for the recluses, who had to exert a great deal of efforts. There was no spiritual attraction for the lay people to be attracted to the religion, though it was the laity which helped the monasteries running by providing provisions for daily life. The only things which they received were sermons befitting good householders, but real emancipation was beyond their reach, since it was to be attained by recluses alone. On the other hand, Mahāyāna opened before the lay people not only the door of Arhathood, but also that of Bodhisattvahood and the ultimate Buddhahood; and, as the Mahāyāna philosophy asserts, the way to the attainment of these great heights was not impracticably stiff. One could steadily achieve them by showing extreme love, compassion and sacrifice for fellow beings as well as by performing certain rituals expressing sincere devotion and gratitude to the Supreme Being. Common people who were not capable of understanding the subtle philosophies or deeper thoughts naturally could not be drawn towards Hīnayāna, whereas they steadily leaned towards Mahāyāna which provided them with ready opportunity for giving vent to their heartfelt devotion by worshipping visual images and shrines.

As such, the householder, while enjoying his family life, could progress in the path of salvation at the same time without going through rigorous religious practices. Naturally, the religious system, which offered such a simple way to salvation, appealed more to the human heart than its rival Hīnayāna which laid great stress on the rigidity of life for the attainment of emancipation. But this made-easy way to emancipation had a two-fold effect. On the one hand, it yielded a bumper harvest of temples, monasteries and a large number of images made of all sorts of materials which enriched the architectural and sculptural wealth of the country for all ages to come, and on the other hand, being too liberal it opened its door to various foreign elements to be incorporated into it; and, as a matter of fact, various Brāhmanical elements made their way into the religion of the Buddha, and made matters highly diverse and complex.

The form of worship of the *Stūpas* and various Buddhist images by the Mahāyānists became almost similar to that of the present-day Brāhmanical temples. The records of the Chinese travellers relate that images of the Buddha were carried with great pomp and rejoicing in special procession sometimes on the full-moon day of the month of Vaiśakha (April-May), the thrice-auspicious day for the Buddhists, as it was the day of the Birth, Enlightenment and Nirvaṇa of the Buddha; and both the monks and the lay people took equal part in such processions. The accounts of both Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang provide us with glowing descriptions of these processions, which remind us of similar ones associated with public carriage of Brāhmanical deities during various religious festivals.[1] While Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang saw the processions of images at Khotan, Pātaliputra and Kanauj, I-Tsing does not refer to such processions but gives an elaborate account of the daily ceremony of bathing the images. He says that it was incumbent on the monks of a monastery to wash the image of the Buddha daily with scented water and other suitable requisites.[2] There were a lot of similarities in practising such rituals between the Buddhists and the Brāhmanists.

Many a Brāhmanical god or goddess was incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon, while the Brāhmanists also accepted not only the Buddhist divinities but also the Buddha himself into their own fold.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, ascribed to c. 6th century A.D., recognises the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishṇu along with Kapila, the founder of the Sāṅkhya system. The *Bṛihaddharma Purāṇa*, which is but an *Upapurāṇa*, also considers the Buddha and Kapila, besides Vālmikī and Vyāsa, as Visṇhu's incarnations. An inscription of the Varaha Perumal Temple, datable to c. 7th century A.D., likewise included the Buddha as one of Vishṇu's Ten *Avatāras*.[3]

The mutual assimilation of Brāhmanical divinities in the Buddhist pantheon and the Buddhist gods and goddesses in the Brāhmanical fold can be well understood from comparative studies of the iconography of the deities of the two communities.

Indra figured in the Buddhist literature from the very beginning. In the earliest period Indra was verily subservient to the Buddha. In the Pali literature Indra is always supplicating the Buddha—either to make the Buddha preach his religion or to offer him (Indra) some advice. Later on, however, Indra's status was raised to some extent as he became the protector of the Buddha as Vajrapāṇi Yaksha. Gradually he was converted into Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. And finally in the full-fledged Vajrayāna pantheon Indra became Adi Buddha Vajrasattva. The term *Vajra* was indeed intimately connected with Buddhism from the very beginning as is clear from various words and names having *vajra* as their component parts, *viz.*, *Vajrāsana*, the seat of the Buddha under the Bodhi tree, Vajrapāṇi Yaksha, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, Ādi Buddha Vajradhara, and finally the cult-name Vajrayāna itself. *Vajra* is but the 'Thunderbolt' (of Indra) which was devastating in strength and adamantine in action.

Ganeśa who in Brahmanical pantheon is a god doing away with evil would often be depicted as being trampled down under the feet of the Buddhist goddesses Aparajitā and Parṇaśabarī.[4]

The conception of the benign aspect of Śiva was borrowed by the Buddhists in the creation of their god Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara, who sits on a lion, wears a tiger's skin and matted hair (*jaṭā-mukuṭa*) and holds out a trident (triśūla) entwined with snakes. Again, the compassionate Buddhist god Lokeśvara combines both the benign aspect of Śiva and the protective aspect of Vishṇu. Then, the fierce aspect of Śiva had its counterpart in a number of Tantric Buddhist gods like the fierce Heruka bearing Vajra, Kapāla ('Skull cup') and *Khaṭvāṅga*. Again, Mahākāla, Nīlakaṇṭha Lokeśvara and Yamāri may also be considered as counterparts of one or other aspect of Śiva also.

The Brāhmanical goddess Kālī has her counterpart in the Buddhist goddess Nairātmā,[5] while Dūrgā, sometimes associated with the aboriginals, appears to have represented in Parṇaśabarī of the Buddhists, who is depicted as wearing a girdle of leaves and is supposed to be the goddess of the Śabara tribe.

Sarasvatī, the Brāhmanical goddess of learning, was adopted by the Buddhists in the same name and with the same role. Interestingly enough, the Mahāyāna Buddhists pantheon had the god Mañjuśrī, who had the qualities of both Sarasvatī and Brahmā and holds in one hand a book and in another a sword which is supposed to cut ignorance.[6]

On the contrary, two outstanding Buddhist goddesses, Tārā and Vajrayoginī were taken into the Brāhmanical Hindu fold without any compunction. Goddess Tārā who was the Śakti or female energy of the Buddha in the early Gupta or even pre-Gupta period, gradually had her various forms. This Mahāyāna deity was, however, incorporated into the Brāhmanical pantheon as a Śākta female divinity. She came to be recognised as one of the ten *Mahāvidyās* of the Śāktas. The Tantric conception of the Buddha and his Śakti Tārā is comparable with that of Śiva and his consort Pārvatī.[7] Then, the Buddhist goddess Vajrayoginī of the Tantric conception, who drinks her own blood flowing from her severed head held in one of her hands is the same as the Brahmanical female deity Chhinnamastā of the Tantric school. She became very popular in the Pāla period and the village Vajrayoginī in the Dacca District of Bangladesh apparently bears the name of that goddess, though no remains of her possible temple have so far been discovered there.

Thus we see that many of the prominent and important Brāhmanical divinities were incorporated into the developed Mahāyāna pantheon—either in the same names or with different names. Mahāyāna gods and goddesses having different names can easily be identified with their Brāhmanical counterparts from a comparative study of their respective attributes and iconographical features. It is, however, interesting that sometimes a single Buddhist deity imbibes the qualities of more than one Brāhmanical divinities, such as Lokeśvara possessing the benign aspect of Śiva and the protective aspect of Vishṇu at the same time. Contrarily, again, the same qualities of any one Brāhmanical deity are incorporated in more than one Buddhist divinity, as the fierceness of Rudra-Śiva is equally shared by the Tantric Buddhist gods Heruka and Mahākāla.

In fact, permutations and combinations of the qualities as well as the iconographic features and attributes of various divinities of one pantheon went into the making of those of the other pantheon. It is not only the later Mahāyāna Tantric Buddhists who borrowed Brāhmanical divinities for their pantheon, but the Hindus of the later Tantric school also equally incorporated into their fold the eminently characteristic Tārā, the female counterpart of Avalokiteśvara as one of the *Daśa-Mahāvidyās*. All these go to show how gradually Buddhism and Brāhmanism came closer and closer–sometimes in apparent antagonism and sometimes in mutual co-operation—until eventually the former was assimilated into the latter. Then the instance of the eminently Tantric Buddhist goddess Vajrayoginī having Chinnamastā as her Tantric Hindu counterpart is no less noteworthy. Here Tantrism became binding or fusing force which vitally attracted and brought together the two distantly moving bodies like Buddhism and Brāhmanical Hinduism like the all-powerful force of gravitation.

This way slowly and gradually the inherent antagonism between the Hindus and the Buddhists was being eased off, and a sure way was being paved for an ultimate merger of Buddhism into the traditional and age-old Brāhmanism, so much so that later Hindu princes of various regions in India made bounteous donations and gifts to the Buddhist communities and their establishments side by side, (as if they were identical) with Hindu ones.

Epigraphical records of our period provide ample evidence to such donations and gifts of Brāhmanical patrons. The Kailan Plate of Sridharaṇa Rāta records donations to the Buddhist Trinity as well as to a number of Brāhmanas for performing 'the Five Sacrifices'[8] A Hiregutti copper-plate inscription, assignable to the late fifth or early sixth century A.D., records the gift of a village to the local Buddhist community by Asaṅkita, who was apparently the first Bhōja king not only to make a grant to the Buddhists but also to adopt the royal insignia of the 'Elephant', apparently the Elephant in whose form the Buddha entered his mother's womb. The Maitraka rulers of Valabhi, though not Buddhists themselves, made bounteous gifts to Buddhist monasteries and some of the ladies of their royal household even became

devoted Buddhist nuns. An inscription from Ratanpur (near Bilaspur) speaks of a Brāhamana who was well-versed in Buddhist literature. And as his Mallar plate records, king Mahāśivagupta, himself a devout Śaiva, granted a village to a Buddhist monastery in the seventh century A.D.[9] On the contrary, Prabhāvatī, the queen of the Buddhist king Devakhaḍga, established an image of Sarvāṇī, one of the forms of goddess Durgā.[10]

However, our period ushered in brisk activities in the academic field, mainly concerning education, religious literature and scholasticism.

The two great monastic centres of Valabhī and Nālandā throbbed in lively scholarly activities of unprecedented magnitude and duly attained the status of great universities of the time. But while we have very little information about the once famous Valabhī University, our information about the University of Nālandā is somewhat adequate. The Nālandā University gained such an international reputation that it attracted a great many devoted scholar-teachers from various parts of India and thousands of students from India and abroad. The dormitories of the Nālandā monastic university is said to have accommodated some ten thousand students. It had apparently a large number of teachers to cope with the great number of students and various different disciplines of study. When the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited and studied at Nālandā, its teaching staff included such illustrious teachers as Dharmapāla, Chandrapāla, Guṇamati, Sthiramati, Prabhamitra, Jinamitra, Jñānachandra and Śīlabhadra, who were widely respected for their deep and profound learning and sharp intellect. Hiuen Tsang himself studied under the last-named savant, Śīlabhadra. The curricula of the Nālandā University included "not only the words of all the eighteen schools of Buddhism, but also various non-Buddhist and secular subjects like the *Vedas*, the *Atharvavidyā*, the *Hetuvidyā* (Logic) *Śabdavidyā* (Grammar), the *Chikitsāvidyā* (Medicine), the *Sāñkhya*, *etc.* It is quite obvious that when such non-Buddhist and secular subjects formed part of the University curricula, the admission of students could not have been restricted

strictly to those of the monastic order alone; the doors of different departments of studies were apparently kept open for non-monastic students, many of whom might have been non-resident day-scholars coming from various surrounding localities. If that was so, the result must have been more and more liberal mixing of monks with the laity and consequent free interchange of ideas. The rich libraries of the Valabhī and the Nālandā Universities housing thousands of manuscripts of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist religious texts and numerous secular subjects must have had, on the other hand, free access for seekers of knowledge from the lay communities of various contemporary religious sects.

However, when during the later part of the Classical Age Buddhism was undergoing a vast revolutionary change in the very land of its origin, it was gradually carving out a very prominent place in countries outside India. Ceylon had long back embraced Buddhism, and Central Asia and China had duly come under its great spell. Buddhism was also very successfully propagated in Japan, but Japan did not receive Buddhism directly from India. Buddhism had to make a long detour via China and Korea to reach that distant land, where it was destined to have a glorious future. Tibet came into the contact of Buddhism during the later part of our period, but it was not until the middle of the eighth century that Buddhism could take a firm root there. The earliest Tibetan king to take active interest in Buddhism was Srong-Tsan-Gam-po, a contemporary of Harshavardhana of Kanauj. It was when Hiuen Tsang was visiting India that king Srong-Tsan-Gam-po sent an officer, Thon-mi Sam-bhoṭa, to India to learn Indian script and language, so that Tibet, which so far had only a dialectical language could have a script of its own. Thon-mi Sam-bhoṭa's efforts to have from India a full-fledged language with grammar and script were successful, but he was not able to establish Buddhism firmly in his country as against the primitive local religion Bon, which believed in ghosts and demons and prescribed lots of superstitious rituals and magic practices to avert their wraths. In fact, Buddhism with its high ethical and philosophical ideals was too sophisticated a religion to the Tibetans of the time, so that it remained

in a fluid state in Tibet for some time to come. Good many Buddhist teachers from India had to flee from the country from the fury of the local people who were still firm in their faith in Bon. It was only about the middle of the eighth century A.D. when Padmasambhava, a great preacher of Tantric practices, went to Tibet that Buddhism attired in Tantric garb could have a firm footing on the soil of Tibet and ultimately became the national religion—sometimes after the period of our study.

Anyway, for obvious reasons, we have only confined our attention to the propagation and steady promotion of Buddhism in China alone, and have desisted ourselves from detailing Buddhist activities in other countries outside India. But it is in the fitness of things that we would like to say a few words about the role of Buddhism and the Buddhist legacy in the neighbouring land of Ceylon (Śrī Laṅkā).

Even if we do not take into serious consideration the claim of the Ceylonese tradition that the Buddha personally visited Ceylon and propagated his religion there, there may be some truth in the other tradition which asserts that the Maurya monarch Aśoka sent his son(?) Mahendra and daughter Saṅghamitrā to Ceylon for the propagation of the religion of the Śākya sage. Any way, the early missionaries took Buddhist canonical texts probably in oral form, which were compiled together and ultimately written down with changes and additions in the first century B.C. under the patronage of king Vaṭṭagāmaṇī. Since then the entire Pali canon was preserved in Ceylon with utmost fidelity. Thus, the complete Pali *Tripitaka* is available to us, thanks to the enterprising zeal of the Ceylonese monks; for, the Buddhist literary texts either written in Pali or in Sanskrit are virtually entirely lost in India today. Since the establishment of Buddhism in Ceylon the *Tripiṭaka* going by the name of *Buddhavachana* has regularly been studied there in great reverence, and numerous new texts and commentaries on different canonical works were being written down throughout the ages both by the Ceylonese Buddhist scholars and their Indian counterparts who went there in subsequent periods. These scholars used both Pali and Simhalese for the purpose. Ceylon in course of time became a great centre of Pali Buddhist literature, which included a great

many extra-canonical works. In fact, when in India during the Classical Age, Pali was being replaced by Sanskrit, three very illustrious Indian scholars went to Ceylon and wrote exegetical works in Pali in order to help people to understand the abstruse teachings of the Buddha and harmonise the apparently conflicting portions of them for an easy grasping of the inner meaning of the doctrines. The three concerned Indian scholars who went to Ceylon and wrote their works in Pali were Buddhaghosha, Buddhadatta and Dharmapāla. Buddhaghosha who wrote quite a few books would have otherwise become immortal for his *Visuddhimagga* alone, which gives the essentials of the entire early Buddhist philosophy. Besides the Visuddhimagga, Buddhaghosha wrote commentaries on most of the texts of the Pali *Tripiṭaka*. Buddhadatta was an elder contemporary of Buddhaghosha and had gone to Ceylon and studied there before the latter. Buddhadatta is well-known for his equally famous works, *viz*., the *Uttaravinichchaya*, the *Vinayavinichchaya*, the *Abhidharmmavatāra* and the *Rūparūpavibhāga*, collectively known as Buddhadatta's Mannual, besides the *Madhuratthavilāsinī*, a commentary on the *Buddhavaṁsa*. Dharmapāla went to Ceylon apparently later than Buddhadatta and Buddhaghosha, and wrote a number of commentaries on different canonical texts, specially those which were not taken up by Buddhaghosha.

Thus, we come to the end of the episode of a religion which flourished during the Classical Age, but ceased its functions in the land of its birth only to migrate in distant lands where it enjoyed a virtual immortality.

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3. *MASI*, No. 26, p. 5.
4. *The Age of Imperial Kanauj* (Ed. R.C. Majumdar), p. 284; IBI, pp. 142, 182.

5. IBI, pp. 90-92, pl. XXX. a.
6. IBI, pp. 349-351.
7. *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 263.
8. *IHQ*, Vol. *XXIII*, pp. 221 ff.
9. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol XXIII, p. 115.
10. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol XIII, p. 357.

List of Abbreviations

AAI : *The Art and Architecture of India* by Benjamin Rowland, 2nd Edition., 1956.

ABORI : *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona.

Acta Ori : *Acta Orientalia*, Leiden.

AIU : *The Age of Imperial Unity*, Ed. R.C. Majumdar.

ASIAR : *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report.*

Aspects, Dutt : *Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism and its Relation to Hinayana* by N. Dutt, London, 1930.

ASSI : *Archaeological Survey of Southern India* by J. Burgess, London, 1887.

ASWI : *Archaeological Survey of Western India.*

Bhandarkar's List : *List of Inscriptions of Northern India*, Appendix to *Epigraphia Indica*, Vols. XIX-XXXIII.

BI : *Buddhist India*, by T.W. Rhys Davids, Calcutta, 1950.

Bibl. Buddh. : *Bibliotheca Buddhica*, Leningrad, 1929.

BIC : *India and China*, by P.C. Bagchi, Bombay, 1950.

BMC(AI) : *British Museum Catalogue of Indian Coins, Ancient India*, By J. Allan, London, 1936.

CA : *The Classical Age*, Ed. R.C. Majumdar.

CII : *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1888.

Coomaraswamy's *Catalogue* : *Catalogue of the Indian Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 1923.

CPB : *Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, by T.R.V. Murti, London, 1955.

DHB : *The History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Dacca, 1943.

Digha Nik. : *Digha Nikaya*, Pali Text Society, London.

EBP : *Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, by J. Takakusu, Honolulu, 1947.

Ep. Ind. : *Epigraphia Indica.*

Fa-Hien, Legge : *Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms, being an Account of the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of his Travels in India and Ceylon*, by James Legge, Oxford, 1886.

GBG : *Gaya and Bodh Gaya*, by Beni Madhab Bårua, Calcutta, 1931 and 1934.

Gil. MSS : *The Gilgit Manuscripts*, Ed. N. Dutt, Calcutta. 1931 and 1934.

GOS : *Gaikwad Oriental Series.*

HB : *Hinduism and Buddhism* by Charles Elliot, London, 1968.

HIEA : *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, 2nd. Edn., by James Fergusson, London, 1910.

HIL : *History of Indian Literature*, by M. Winternitz, Calcutta, 1933.

IAL : *Indian Art and Letters*, London.

IA : *Indian Archaeology*—A Review, New Delhi.

IBE : *Introduction of Buddhist Esoterism*, by Benoytosh Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1932.

IBI : *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, by Benoytosh Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1968.

IC : *Indian Culture*, Calcutta.

IHQ : *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta.

ILCFE : *Indian Literature in China and Far East*, by P.K. Mukherjee, Calcutta, 1931.

Ind. Ant. : *Indian Antiquary.*

Ind. Arch. : *Indian Architecture*, Vol. I (Hindu and Buddhism) by Percy Brown, Bombay, 1949.

ITB : *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, by Sashi Bhusan Dasgupta, Calcutta, 1950.

ITBU : *Indian Teachers in Buddhist Universities* by Phanindra Nath Bose, Madras, 1923.

I-Tsing : *Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago*, by J. Takakusu, Oxford, 1896.

JA : *Journal Asiatique*, Paris.

JAHRS : *Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*, Rajmahendry.

JASB : *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta.

JISOA : *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Calcutta.

JRAS	: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, London.
KMIB	: *Manual of Indian Buddhism* by H. Kern, New Delhi, 1968.
Life	: *The Life of Hiuen Tsang by the Samanas Hwui Li and Yen-Tsung* by S. Beal, London, 1888.
MASB	: *Memories of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta.
MASI	: *Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India*, New Delhi.
Nang. Cat	: *Catalogue of the Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka*, by B. Nanjio, Oxford.
ORC	: *Obscure Religious Cults*, by Sashi Bhusan Dasgupta, Calcutta, 1969.
PHAI[5]	: *Political History of Ancient India*, 5th Edn., by H.C. Raichaudhuri, Calcutta, 1950.
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